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Early American Jewry

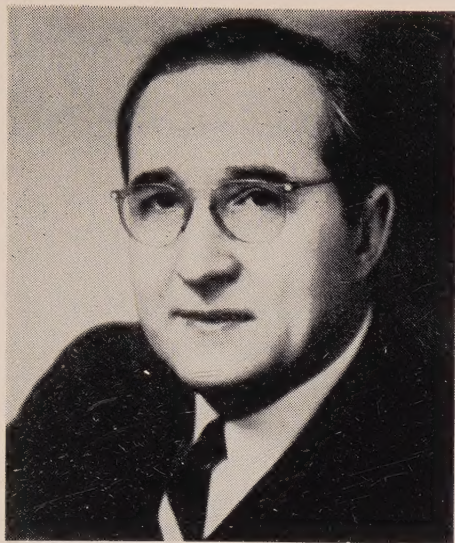
The Jews in the American Northeast, 1649-1794

by JACOB R. MARCUS

"The study of American Jewry invites the inquiring mind. It is an integral part of the larger field of American history. It is a particular which brightly illumines the general history, especially in the crucial early and formative years of America . . ."

"We wish to write of the history of the American Jew because he is an integral and significant part of America—and because we, as Jews, have an avid desire to know how our fathers lived in this land."

The above statements, taken from the Introduction of this volume, express its author's motives for writing it. Professor Marcus begins with the coming of the first Jew to Boston in 1649 and continues to the last decade of the 18th century in the U. S. and Canada. For the better understanding of the life and activity of the Jews of that time the author tried a new approach to history writing. He attempted to penetrate beneath the surface of actions and events to reflect the hopes, wishes and everyday joys and heartaches of the average men and women who, in the final analysis, played the most important roles on the early American scene. The volume is not intended to be a formal history of American Jewry in the Colonial Northeast; nevertheless most events of importance in the story of the Jews in that time and place are mentioned in the course of the narrative. The result is an intimate study of the ups and downs of the common man, an informative and interesting history of the founding fathers of the American Jewish community.



ARY

WRY

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He is the author of a series of books important to Jewish life and letters, among which might be included: *The Rise and the Destiny of the German Jew*; *The Jew in the Medieval World*, first source book in English on medieval Jewish history; and *Communal Sick Care in the German Ghetto*, an absorbing story of the origins of Jewish communal, hospital and charity groups of medieval Jewry. He is a regular contributor to the *Hebrew Union College Annual* and other scholastic journals. Dr. Marcus is chairman of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society, and Vice-President of the American Jewish Historical Society.



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Early American Jewry

THE JEWS OF NEW YORK
NEW ENGLAND AND CANADA

1649-1794

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*Many years ago a graduate student at the
University of Berlin dedicated his thesis*

To

Pretty Nettie Brody

*Today, after twenty-five years of married
life, he dedicates this book to the same woman,*

His Wife

Preface

ON SEEING the title of this work some people may say: Why a book on American *Jewish* history? Those students who know the paucity of available collected sources may with justice add: How is it possible to write American Jewish history? Others, with a sardonic grin, will go one step farther and inquire: What is a "Jew"? What is American Jewish history? All these questions are justified.

In answer to the second query we can cheerfully declare that it is no more difficult today to write American Jewish history than it is to make bricks without clay. The clay, the sources, are still to be dug up. In this field there are no biographical or historical dictionaries, no atlases, no auxiliary works, few collected sources, no satisfactory union list of Jewish serials, no genealogical tables, not a single complete history of the American Jew that satisfies the canons of modern methodology and criticism. The basic tools with which every historian works are still missing.

We are not, however, entirely bereft of material for our

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purpose. The American Jewish Historical Society has already published many volumes of essays. Most of them have been written by gifted amateurs, and we are grateful for what they have created. Although many of these studies will have to be revised, they are still the primary body of historical writing in the American Jewish field.

The historian who seeks to write the history of the American Jew must through his own labor create his own tools, aids, and reference works. What is more, he must be constantly resigned to the expectation that the emergence of a single new fact, hitherto unknown to him, will shatter a cherished thesis.

It is, of course, important that the student of this discipline answer the question: What is a Jew? Explanations of the term "Jew" almost equal the number of historians. The definition will of necessity be subjective. Our definition is: Anyone was a Jew who said he was a Jew. He who was born a Jew was a Jew, even though he may have denied or changed his religion. Judah Monis, who lived in Boston or Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1720, was still Judah Monis the "Jew" in 1722 despite the fact that he had been baptized. A man who had one Jewish parent, we maintain, comes within the scope of our study, even though that person maintained no interest in the Jewish community. For the purpose of this writing the children of converts to Christianity who remained Christian are no longer classified as Jews.

What is American Jewish history? In a more restricted sense it is the history of the Jewish religious community. In the broadest sense it is also the study of the individual

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Jew—or of Jewry—in relation to the larger community. Thus American Jewish history may also embrace inquiry into civil and political rights, economic patterns, cultural standards and accomplishments, social acceptance and social goals.

We may now return to our primary question: Why a book on American *Jewish* history? Interest in Jews has never failed, certainly for two thousand years. It still abides. There is intellectual curiosity about them among both Jews and non-Jews, as the natural interest human beings would have in a “certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces . . . and their laws are diverse from those of every people” (Esther 3:8).

The study of American Jewry invites the inquiring mind. It is an integral part of the larger field of American history. It is a particular which brightly illumines the general history, especially in the crucial early and formative years of America. The connection of the Jews with the new world goes back to the days of Columbus. Most students of the Columbus Question have rejected the thesis that the great discoverer was of Spanish Jewish origin. But Luis de Santangel, who helped finance the first voyage of Columbus, is known to have been a born Jew; so were a number of the men of Columbus' crew. At how early a time Jews were in America can be gauged from the fact that the Brazilian-Dutch-Jewish refugees who landed in New Amsterdam in 1654 held religious services there long before the majority of Protestant sects had established themselves in this country.

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But the interest is not confined to the early period. American Jewry had its beginnings in the middle-seventeenth century in a little community of about twenty-four souls. Now, in the twentieth century, it has grown to almost five million people. If the Jews are to be classified as a "religious" group, then they are the fifth largest denomination in the United States, following behind the Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, and Catholics. Furthermore, American Jewry is today the largest, if not the most important, body of Jews in the world. At least one-half of all the world's Jews live in this land. There has never been a Jewry anywhere comparable to this one, certainly in generosity and in the determination to help its coreligionists.

Christians—more frequently than Jews!—have thirsted with curiosity about those whom they recognized as the Chosen People of the Old Testament. Cotton Mather, Samuel Sewall, and many others of the early New England worthies, had an almost morbid desire to know more about this people. A Quaker woman, about 1818, made a special trip to look at the first Jewish settler in Cincinnati. She turned him around and around and inspected him critically. "Well, thou art no different to other people," she finally said.

Such curiosity was largely motivated by religious preoccupations. It was not shared by many of our "secular" historians a generation or two ago. The prevailing mood was Anglocentric. No one will question the fact that basic among the themes in American history are the knowledge of Anglo-Saxon institutions, the Constitution, the expand-

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ing frontier, sectionalism, slavery and reconstruction, wars and tariffs, the rise of agriculture, industrialism, and capitalism. But all this is only part of the picture. There can be no adequate history of America if the historian ignores the political, cultural, economic, and religious life of the non-English elements. More recent historians are zealous for a deeper and better understanding of the varied forces that helped mold American culture.

The study of even one so small a group may well add color and depth to our knowledge of American life. The American Jew has never been obscure. Ever since the days of Peter Stuyvesant his "high visibility" has been palpable. He has always done business on Main Street. He shares with other groups a wide diversity of roles, as butcher, cattle-dealer, storekeeper, Indian trader, merchant, and shipper, and—in the present—policeman, taxicab driver, garment worker, industrialist, merchant prince, physicist, general, admiral, cabinet officer, Supreme Court justice, and labor leader.

We wish to write of the history of the American Jew because he is an integral and significant part of America—and because we, as Jews, have an avid desire to know how our fathers lived in this land.

The present work—to be completed in two volumes—is a study of early American Jewish life in its formative stage. It covers the years 1649 to about 1790. This is part of the Sephardic period. The *Sephardim*, or Spanish-Portuguese Jews, were the first settlers here. The term should not, however, be construed as an ethnic one. Spanish-Portuguese

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Jews ceased to be the majority group in this country no later than the first quarter of the eighteenth century, but their religious culture and synagogue discipline, which were accepted by those who followed them, were dominant in the American Jewish community until at least the third decade of the nineteenth century.

The Sephardic period may be said to have ended by 1840; this was the last year that Sephardic communal leadership was apparent. Although by that time individuals of Ashkenazic or German and Polish origin constituted the vast majority of the Jews in this land, the Sephardic congregations, because of their age, wealth, and social prestige, maintained their leadership. They were outstanding among those who aroused American citizens—both Jews and non-Jews—to protest the barbarities inflicted upon innocent Jews in Damascus in 1840. They were in the vanguard in this, the first concerted act of a newborn American Jewry. Yet that very year witnessed the culmination of their spiritual control. Though New York City Sephardic Jews were outstanding among the leaders who denounced the Damascus outrage, the trustees of Congregation Shearith Israel refused to allow the protest meeting to be held in their synagogue. Apparently the 1840 bold summons to action by Sephardic Jewry exhausted them; it was their dying gesture as a dominant community. The German Jews were ready to assume leadership.

Throughout the 1840's, German-Jewish congregations and societies sprang up in dozens of different communities. Their ritual, their leaders, their philosophy of religious adaptation became typical in the Jewish population centers.

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Of the hundreds of new synagogues to rise in the next generation, only three or four adopted the Sephardic rite. As early as 1841, when the first attempt was made to organize American Jews on a national scale, the plan was to be published not only in English, but also in German. From then on the culture, language, instruction—the “atmosphere”—of American Jewry were to be strongly Germanic. After 1840, the German Jewish immigrant dominated the cultural and the spiritual life of American Jewry until rivalled by East European immigrants.

The prime purpose of the writer of this work was better to understand the American Jews of the colonial and the early national period. From the vantage point of centuries he wanted to catch them unawares and to peer into their souls—at least to peep over their shoulders as they wrote to one another.

Like many others today, he has found little human satisfaction in much of the historical data as usually presented. Not that the conventional method of selection is inadequate. Quite correctly the historian of today emphasizes ideas, movements, and trends. But in this effort the average individual disappears. The part is swallowed up in the whole. We seek, as a counterbalance, to snatch the individual from the anonymous mass and to delineate his role in the larger events. We want to humanize our knowledge, to understand the average Jew, the small shopkeeper, if you will, in his everyday life. Once we begin to describe his actions in some detail, he begins to take on flesh and blood. He comes to life.

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The medium we have used to accomplish our purpose is the personal letter. This study of the early American Jew is built around the letters and petitions he wrote.

Printed sources dealing with Jews of the colonial and early national days are by no means plentiful. The letters they wrote—most frequently business notes—supplement the printed documentary data, and letters are a prime source of information, for in those days of slow travel and of no telephone they were the chief form of long distance communication.

The advantage in using them, as we have intimated, is their articulateness. Documents seem mute, impenetrable. Letters are more apt to express the inner, the truer emotions. By virtue of the fact that they were not written for the "record," that they were not deliberately prepared with an eye to history, they loom large in our scale of values. If the aim of the historian is to understand the facts *as they really were*, to penetrate beneath the surface of accomplished events, then he may well turn to the letters which people wrote to one another. In many respects a letter is a slice of life. It may not be a juicy slice, but then life is not always juicy.

Personal communications frequently reveal the spirit of the age. They mirror the thinking and prejudices of people who witnessed events of great moment. At times they reflect the attitude of important actors in the affairs of the day; at other times they record the reaction of lesser players whose impressions are almost as significant for the historian, because the blunt common man expressed himself more freely, more honestly.

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But let us not be extravagant in our expectations, for these personal communications rarely answer all our questions. This is true; yet, nevertheless, they are certainly one of our best sources. They record the changes that occurred in the early American Jew, the influence of the new environment on his inner self, on his religious outlook, on his political goals.

Back in the old country the pious Jew, whatever his occupation, studied rabbinic literature, pondered the fate of his people, prayed for the Messiah, and exulted in the martyrs who had died for the glorification of the Ineffable Name. Here, in colonial towns, in the dark forest, on the high seas, the man who had to flee from pirates, face the Indians, and dare the hazards of frontier life was surely not the same man who rocked back and forth, intoning the Talmud, in a German or Polish ghetto academy. A new Jew was being created. The letters these men wrote may give us some inkling of how the change came into being.

The initiate in historical method knows that the letters one seeks are not always available. Maybe they were never written. At any rate they no longer exist—or we cannot find them. Furthermore, few have been published, and there is no union list of manuscripts. The large collections we have—like the Lopez letters, for instance—have come to us largely through accident. We may well assume that if Aaron Lopez had died an old man, retired from active business, rich without debts, his papers would have been destroyed. But because he was drowned, a middle-aged man, leaving what appears to have been an insolvent estate, his

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papers were preserved. We are fortunate, for the Lopez collections at the Newport Historical Society Library and other places include hundreds of items.

Some of the letters at our disposal are not so coherent as we would like. Practically all of them, in the colonial period at least, were written by immigrants from non-English-speaking lands. These men did not enjoy the advantages of a good English education; the spelling and the organization of the material leave much to be desired. (This is not to imply that the native-born American who had a formal education wrote a better letter!)

This is not a source book. At least it was never intended to be one after the fashion of present-day source books. Few of the classic documents in American Jewish history have been reproduced here. The narrative is as important as the letters themselves. The attempt has been made to integrate the letters into a story so as to create an organic whole. The letters are the core; the narrative, correcting and supplementing the data of the correspondent, seeks always to throw light on attendant circumstances, on the people and the times. If a writer through his missive unwittingly distorts an event, the narrative attempts to bring it back into focus.

In this presentation we have sought to touch at least on basic movements. If we have succeeded at all in this effort, then this work is an informal history of the early American Jew. It does not hew to the line mechanically, stubbornly, like the surveyor who cuts straight through to his distant goal. It is more like a broad river moving leisurely from source to mouth, winding through broad valleys, cov-

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ering great stretches of territory. By travelling on a meandering stream, one moves much more slowly—but one learns to know the countryside.

In the preparation of the letters for publication very few changes have been made. The punctuation and paragraphing are frequently modified to ensure readability. Hebrew and Yiddish words written in the Latin or in the Hebrew script are put in italics. An apparent inconsistency in the transliteration of Hebrew words will be noticed. The author of this work has followed the system of transliteration adopted by *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, modified only by the omission of diacritical marks. This form of transliteration is maintained in the narrative; the letter writers, however, had their own system—or lack of system—and their spelling, naturally, has been retained. Two forms of orthography, therefore, for the same word may occur in the same paragraph or on the same page.

The spelling of proper nouns frequently offers difficulties. In the same letter the writer may spell his own name in two different ways. Proper nouns are left in the letter texts exactly as they are found. However, the standard spelling of the same name is used in the narrative.

The principle followed all through the book is the attempt to retain the orthography of the writer of the letter. *Mistakes in spelling in the letters are mistakes in the original.*

It was with a considerable degree of hesitation that we have decided to omit all documentation touching on the narrative. We did this because we did not desire to weigh

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this small book down with the burden of a rather heavy apparatus. Naturally, if there is any specific reference that is of interest to the workers in the field we shall be only too happy to supply it. It is our intention, in a later, more formal, history of American Jewry, to present a completely annotated study.

Every attempt has been made in this work to adhere rigidly to the facts. Frequently deductions are introduced which we believe are justified by the known facts and by the accepted rules of critical methodology. The auxiliaries "may" and "might" have been worked overtime; the adverbs "probably" and "possibly" have been scattered widely in every chapter, but, as we would again remind the reader, the science of American Jewish history is literally in its swaddling clothes. There are so few learned works. There is so much that we do not know.

That errors will be found here is certain. The author will be grateful to those who draw his attention to them in critical reviews or through personal communications.

And now we have the pleasant task of thanking all who have helped in the preparation of this work. To the legion of colleagues whose books and essays have guided me, I am truly grateful. I am fully conscious of my debt to them. The staffs of the various historical societies and libraries have been most gracious in their constant and unfailing courtesies.

Mr. Samuel Broches of Boston has generously sent me copies of several manuscripts which otherwise would not

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have been available to me. For this courtesy I wish to express my thanks.

I am grateful to the following persons and institutions for permission to print or to republish manuscripts and printed letters: The American Jewish Historical Society; The New York State Library, Manuscripts and History Section, Albany, New York; Lee M. Friedman; Emily Solis-Cohen; The Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; Mr. Harry Smith and the Grand Lodge A. F. & A. M. of Massachusetts; The Yale University Library; The Public Archives of Canada; The Library of Congress; Séminaire du Saint Joseph; The Newport Historical Society; The Harvard University Library; The Massachusetts Historical Society; The John Carter Brown Library; and The Rhode Island State Archives.

It is a great pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to the staff of the American Jewish Archives; they have been most helpful in the preparation of this work. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Selma Stern-Taeubler, the archivist of that institution. She has gone over my manuscript more than once and has made many valuable suggestions. To Henry Cohen, one of my students at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, my thanks are due for his kindness in carefully reading this book from the point of view of English style. My classmate and good friend of many years' standing, Rabbi Abraham I. Shinedling, has read the text both in manuscript and in galleys and has prepared the index, a most laborious task. To him I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for this labor of love. Edwin Wolf 2nd has carefully scruti-

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nized the text and has graciously offered me the benefit of his wide experience in matters literary.

And, finally, I wish to thank my old friend Dr. Samuel Sandmel for the many hours of labor he has spent in a critical reading of the completed manuscript. As in the case of some of my previous works, he has been a tower of strength to me in matters of style and in questions of scholarly import. For his self-sacrificing kindness and for this evidence of a personal friendship which I deeply cherish, I am very grateful.

JACOB R. MARCUS

Cincinnati, Ohio

April 1, 1951

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THE JEWS OF NEW YORK
NEW ENGLAND AND CANADA

1649-1794

Chapter I

Background for the First American Jewish Community, 1654

TODAY, in the twentieth century, there are over four and one-half million Jews in the United States of America. In the first half of the seventeenth century there were probably not more than ten or twenty Jews who wandered in and out of the English, French, and Dutch colonies on the North American mainland or lived "underground" as Marranos in the Spanish provinces of Florida and New Mexico.

The total population of the European nationals along the Atlantic seaboard, from Florida to Maine, was probably well under 75,000 at the time that the first permanent Jewish community was established on Manhattan Island in 1654. Most of these were in the English settlements. It is not surprising, therefore, that there were very few Jews in the Protestant theocratic settlements of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay after the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620, that no Jews, as far as we know, were found in the Connecticut towns for a generation

Early American Jewry

after the arrival of the first settlers in 1635. Even the religious freedom of Rhode Island and the Providence Plantations, available to all since the 1630's, offered little attraction to West European Jewry then facing an age of increasing toleration and an expanding money economy.

Maryland, settled by the Catholic Calverts in 1634, was tolerant only of those who professed belief in Jesus Christ, and it threatened death and confiscation to all others who denied the godhead of any of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Even the oldest and most important of the English colonies, Virginia, established in 1607 at Jamestown, had no Jewish immigration for almost two generations. Here, in the southernmost of the Anglo-Saxon settlements, the farm economy and the prevailing intransigence toward all infidels, savages, and Catholics made this region no more inviting to Jews than the other English settlements to the north.

Where were the Jews of the world in the first decades of the seventeenth century? What brought the first handful of these wanderers to the American shores after the turn of the half-century? What did men here think of them? What was their relation to the people about them? What manner of life and community did they build in their new American homeland?

There were probably fewer than two million Jews in the world in the first half of the seventeenth century. At most, a million were in Europe; the rest were in North Africa and Asia. Scattered individuals among these North African and Levantine Jews had attained wealth and com-

Background—First American Jewish Community, 1654

fort through trade, shipping, and influence at court; the masses, however, were underprivileged craftsmen and petty traders who lived in unrelieved squalor and suffering. Secular education and culture in the Ottoman Empire were of a very low order, but intellectually and morally the Jews were nurtured by their rabbinic studies and their spiritual leaders. Economic life was constantly exposed to the hazards of oriental despotism, the whims of arbitrary, erratic rulers, and the prevalence of venality in almost all official relations. The masses, sunk in despair, hoped for relief only through divine intercession in the form of some messianic manifestation.

In spite of the fact that the Islamic Orient, the Balkans, and the North African coast may have sheltered the largest concentrated body of Jews in the world of that day, Jewish spiritual life did not find its highest expression in those areas. Poland was the religious center of world Jewry. Here there were large numbers of Jews, possibly half a million or more, and it was during the period from about 1600 to 1648 that they enjoyed their rabbinic golden age. It was inevitable in a loosely organized state like Poland, where the bureaucratic apparatus for centralizing activity was undeveloped, that the Jews should develop their own political institutions with the approval of the king and the magistrates. Polish Jewry—and neighboring Lithuanian Jewry, too—was organized on the basis of strong community councils which in turn sent their delegates to provincial and national assemblies. This national congress, the Council of Four Lands, met periodically to apportion the state taxes and to decide on matters of religion, culture,

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and public relations. Together with the co-opted rabbis, the Council exercised legislative, judicial, and executive functions.

But in Poland, too, secular studies were of an elementary nature, for in an agrarian land, where the preponderant majority of workers were serfs, the schools were altogether inadequate. Among the Jews, however, where religious and rabbinic studies were avidly pursued, nearly everyone was literate and enjoyed some acquaintance with ethical and legal literature. Hebraic studies flourished because talmudic law was authoritative: Jewish civil courts enjoyed wide recognition. There were literally hundreds, if not thousands, of competent Jewish scholars in this great Polish-Lithuanian kingdom that stretched from the Oder River region in the west to within 200 miles of Moscow in the east.

Economically there were few fields which Polish Jews did not cultivate. Many were craftsmen, others were petty traders. The more substantial merchants exported the raw materials of the land in exchange for the finished goods and luxury wares of Central and Western Europe. There were no Jewish serfs; there were dirt farmers, lessees of estates, and powerful stewards who administered the vast *latifundia* of the Polish overlords.

It was because of the economic misery on these almost boundless estates that Polish Jewry suffered its first crushing blow. No feudal economy is ever free from servile revolts. These social upheavals are particularly brutal where religion is an additional exacerbating factor. The peasants in the Ukraine were Greek Orthodox, the exploit-

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ing stewards were frequently Jews, the rapacious owners were Roman Catholic, and when the oppressed peasants rose against their masters, led by the Cossack hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki, the uprising was accompanied by all the ruthlessness and horror of a religious crusade. As the victorious peasants, Cossacks, and their Tatar allies penetrated into the western, Catholic areas, the Jews in the towns and villages received little sympathy from their Catholic compatriots. The Catholic Reformation in Poland was now in full swing. Riots against the Jews were not infrequent, ritual murder accusations which resulted in the torture and death of innocent individuals increased with alarming frequency; the king, subject to the control of the nobility and the clergy, had little real authority. The all-powerful Church, as an institution, refused to raise its hand to alleviate the lot of the Jewish infidels, who, so it believed, exercised far too much economic power.

The war begun by Chmielnicki and his allies in 1648 initiated a series of conflicts in the Polish state that lasted for twelve years. The Russians and Swedes soon joined in; the country was invaded from all sides; and the Jews suffered doubly, from the invaders and from their Polish neighbors. Tens of thousands of Jews were killed, their homes and property were taken from them. Many took to the roads impoverished, but there was no escape for the masses who were compelled to remain behind.

Like their coreligionists in Turkey, the East European Jews, during these sad days of 1648, had but one hope, the hope of relief by God himself, who would now realize that their cup was more than full and would send his Messiah

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to bring them back to the Promised Land. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, that a long-yearned-for Messiah now appeared. He was a Smyrna adventurer, Shabbethai Zebi, who admitted his messianic mission in 1648, and by 1665 was widely acclaimed as far west as Amsterdam and London. For the Jews of the world, to whom he promised a speedy rebirth of the ancient homeland, he was a symbol of escape, of hope, of security in a generation marked by oppression, poverty, and massacre, and though he betrayed his people by his inability to fulfill his promises and by his conversion to Islam, they still continued to dream of a divine intervention that would bring them relief from their ever-present misery.

The masses had nothing left but their dreams, for there was no form of rapid transportation to speed them to new lands and to safety. Indeed, there were few countries in Europe at this time willing to admit them. Spain and Portugal were both closed to them by virtue of expulsion decrees and the dread zeal of the ever watchful Inquisition. Like the Iberian lands, England and France still honored their ancient decrees expelling the Jews, and Italy and Germany sheltered them only by virtue of the accident that there was no central political authority powerful enough to drive out the handful who still were tolerated.

Because of the effectiveness of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, now almost a century old in Italy, the social and economic status of the Jew in that land was precariously low, for a Catholic inner reformation, a sincere devotion to canon law, could only bring forth intolerance toward the Jew. The bull *Cum Nimis Absurdum* of Paul IV, issued in

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1555, compelled the Roman Jews to wear the yellow hat, to live in ghettos, and to trade only in secondhand clothing. It forbade them to own property, and they were permitted to have but one synagogue. Though many individuals throughout the peninsula were widely read in the classical and later literatures, poverty, superstition, and fear of the Church were still typical of the average Italian Jew.

Across the Alps in Germany, the Jews had suffered with all Germans the horrors of the Thirty Years' War which had just come to an end. The vast devastation of this brutal struggle only marked the culmination of centuries of plague, wars, massacres, and expulsion, which had almost destroyed the Jewish communities of Central Europe. The last dying gasp of German medievalism—certainly as it touched the Jews—brought the expulsion of Jews from Hamburg and Vienna. Moved by petty annoyances and constant irritations, the Jewish merchant in his little German village was no different from his Polish coreligionist or his Asia Minor fellow-Jew in praying devoutly for the advent of the Messiah. Shabbethai Zebi had thousands of followers in Central and Western Europe who fasted, prayed, and dispersed their goods in charity in order to merit the salvation of the Turkish Messiah.

Yet the year 1648 was to mark a new epoch in the history of the Jew. There was a fresh new breeze sweeping over the European lands, the keen invigorating air of natural law, modernity, and respect for human rights. During the very days of the Thirty Years' War, Newton, Galilei, Descartes, Bacon, Locke, and Spinoza were born or

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died, and these were the men who gave birth to an age of reason which rocked medieval theology and religious prejudice to their very foundations.

The spectacle of millions of men killing each other for the greater glory of God brought about a profound distrust of revealed religion on the part of many intellectuals. God, immortality, and ethics—all rationally demonstrable verities—are the common heritage of all men. Deed is far more important than creed. The Jew by virtue of his basic beliefs is the religious peer of the Christian. These were the ideas that now began slowly and stubbornly to germinate in the minds and the hearts of the philosophers. And even the unphilosophic but practical rulers moved a step forward: the Catholic, after the Treaty of Westphalia, faced with the fact that the Protestant heresy was here to stay, was more inclined to tolerate a Jewish infidel than a hated heretic, and some Protestant rulers showed the same preference for Jews over Catholics! Tolerance, if only opportunistic, was on the march.

There were political and economic changes of great moment. The Church, since the fourth Christian century, had declared that only a good Christian could be a good citizen; the State now began to modify this concept. The absolute state, going back to classical Roman traditions where religion was not the all-important factor determining a man's capacity to serve his country, now believed that it and not the Church should determine the criteria of citizenship. Jealous of their own authority and prerogatives, the emerging national states were concerned primarily with the attack on the estates and the feudal powers,

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the furtherance of their own dynastic goals, the financing of their armies, and the expansion of their civil administration. Money was the answer to most of the problems, and an enlarged concept of wealth was now possible through the new commerce and industry of the Commercial Revolution.

The sixteenth century had already witnessed the beginning of the transfer of the centers of international trade from the Mediterranean basin to the Atlantic shores of Western and Northern Europe. Land routes employed since the days of the Jewish Radanites (intercontinental merchants) in the early Middle Ages now gave way to ocean highways. The discovery of the Americas and the new sea routes to India and the East had revolutionized commerce and trade. The whole world was now within the ambit of the adventurous mariner. New lands and new products brought the much desired wealth. The rising states of France, Holland, and England had, within a century, long outdistanced the Italian republics and the once proud Hanseatic towns. The chartered stock company was created in the growing national states to settle and to rule the expanding colonial provinces. Through them, America was to become not only a source of economic strength for the people back home, but also an extension of the cherished culture and civilization of the distant fatherland. Europe had spilt over into the Americas.

But commerce requires men with skills and traditions, such as many Jews possessed. The autocratic ruler in Prussia or France or an occasional Italian city, fighting the jealous estates for grants of men and money, now began to

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lean heavily on the taxworthy Jews. The emerging democracy of Cromwell's insular England found Jewish economic enterprise just as acceptable and helpful. All forward-looking states were inclined to grant a grudging tolerance to almost anyone—even to Jews—who could stimulate commerce and industry and start the flow of money, gold, and exports in the right direction.

The Jews were too intelligent to be unaware of their importance in the new commercially-motivated states. This was made quite clear in the politico-economic tractate of the Venetian rabbi Simeone Luzzatto. If the republic of Venice was declining, and that was an open secret, it was due in part to its intolerant and narrow attitude toward its productive Jewish citizens. Humbly, but clearly, he pointed out in his *Discourse on the Status of the Jews* (1638) that his coreligionists brought with them commerce, trade, and prosperity. The Jews provided hundreds of thousands of ducats in the payment of taxes. An enterprising land may well be judged by its treatment or mistreatment of these sons of Israel. King Solomon in his Proverbs (14:28) had clearly enunciated this mercantilistic philosophy so that even those who ran could read: "In the multitude of a people is the king's glory, but in the want of people is the ruin of the prince!"

How did this new mercantilism affect the small Jewish communities that were still in existence in Western and Central Europe? The Spanish and Portuguese Jews had gone underground and had no communal life, although they were active as individuals in the national and colonial commerce that now reached from one end of the world

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to the other. Hundreds of desperate Spanish and Portuguese Marranos, fleeing before the Inquisitional fires, had found refuge in France where they had been tacitly welcomed since the middle-sixteenth century. When Alsace was joined to France at the end of the Thirty Years' War, the thousands of German Jews—traders, peddlers, cattle dealers, and petty moneylenders—who eked out a precarious existence in the towns and villages, were allowed to remain. The old 1394 decree of expulsion was not applied to them; they were tolerated even though few civil and economic rights were accorded them.

Farther eastward the German lands sorely needed rehabilitation. They had been the scene of the marching and countermarching *Landsknechte* who for thirty years had robbed and impoverished and burned the farmsteads and hamlets of the stricken provinces. Money, capital, and enterprise were so vital here that even a good Protestant like the Great Elector, Frederick William of Prussia, had no choice. If he was to rebuild the ravaged lands, Jews would have to be called in. Accordingly, only two years after the Treaty of Westphalia, Polish Jews were invited by the Elector to move about in the Brandenburg Electorate in order to further commerce and trade, and all citizens and subjects of high and low degree were sternly warned not to offend them or to infringe upon the rights accorded them in the Electoral charter. Nor was it an accident or whim when, in 1671, Frederick William invited as permanent settlers to his Brandenburg and Krossen lands fifty of the richest Jewish families who had been expelled from Vienna just a year before. This invitation

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was something new, all but revolutionary. It was almost an "unchristian" approach, for now the first step had been taken to give these people a place in the state. They were not to be brutally exploited; they were to be encouraged to become productive denizens. Together with the Christian merchants—who still opposed them vigorously—they were in the next two centuries to fight a common struggle for political equality, civil liberty, and economic opportunity.

As far as the Jew was concerned, in no place was the new age of tolerance better documented than in Holland. Jews had been in the Protestant Netherlands long before the Utrecht Union of 1579 which brought independence from Spain. With the revolution crypto-Jews could show their true colors and could help the Netherlanders in their fight against Spain. This common enemy of Jews and Dutchmen probably was responsible for cementing the foundations of tolerance in the Low Countries. By the 1590's a tolerated Jewish community of Spanish-Portuguese or Sephardic Jews began to emerge; by 1635 the German Jews started coming in large numbers across the borders; and after 1648, Polish and Russian refugees, rabbis and scholars found shelter in Amsterdam.

These German and Polish or Ashkenazic Jews, as a *type*, were men of deep piety, rigidly observant, learned in Hebrew lore, but frequently untutored in the amenities of Western social intercourse and untouched by the culture and the concepts of Christian philosophical and theological thinking. Spiritually many of them were still moored to medieval modes of thought.

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The Spanish and Portuguese Jews, however, were men of considerable secular culture, at home in modern philosophies and literatures, courtly and courteous, accustomed to move in the best Christian circles, dignified in their carriage, masters of the vernacular, and economic entrepreneurs of daring vision. Their knowledge of Hebraic lore was often tenuous, their piety—in spite of the martyrdom of individuals at the hands of the Inquisition—apparently not so deeply rooted as was that of their less polished Ashkenazic fellow-Jews whom they snubbed or disdained.

Numbered among these seventeenth century *Sephardim* were men like Uriel da Costa, an early deist; Manasseh ben Israel, printer, author, scholar, and political entrepreneur; Baruch Spinoza; and Isaac Aboab, who sat on the court that banned the young Jewish philosopher. Aboab was no ignorant, narrow-minded, bigoted fanatic. If his library, the catalogue of which is still extant, is any criterion, he was a man of broad and liberal culture, for he owned not only the basic legal and mystical works of a learned rabbi, but also the best of the ancient Greek and Latin classics, the modern essays and writings of Hobbes and Montaigne, and a wide variety of standard books in Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and French. "Manasseh," once said the Jesuit Antonio de Vieira, "says what he knows; Aboab knows what he says."

Holland had reached the zenith of its political life in the middle-seventeenth century. It was a small but powerful state. Amsterdam was the commercial center of the world, and the Dutch colonial empire now extended from New Amsterdam and Brazil in the New World to Sumatra in

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the Indian Ocean. Though not citizens in the full sense of the word, the Jews who lived in this new state had helped to build it and were accorded many elementary civil and economic liberties. Holland was the magnet that drew Jews from all parts of Europe: first Marranos from the Iberian Peninsula, and later Lithuanian and Ukrainian refugees from distant Slavonic lands. But the country was small, competition was keen, and many Jews seeking greater opportunities left Holland to create "colonies" in Hamburg, England, and the Americas.

The Dutch-Sephardic colony in England, which was to assume increasing importance with the rise of the English state, owes much to Manasseh ben Israel, the Amsterdam rabbi. England had been closed officially to Jews since their expulsion in the thirteenth century; Manasseh was determined to open the gates to Jewish immigration once again. There were many reasons why this rabbinic statesman sought to reopen the English ports to his fellow-Jews: the throngs of uprooted German and East European wanderers were in search of new homes; Manasseh, struggling hard to make a livelihood, may have been looking for new opportunities for himself. Moreover, the first Navigation Act of 1651, insisting on the transport of British commerce in British ships, made it advisable for the Dutch Jewish merchants to set up affiliate companies in England, the personnel of which would establish residence there. And not the least among Manasseh's reasons was the hope that with the scattering of the Jews to the farthest *ends* of the earth, to the "*angleland*," to England, the biblical prophecies of dispersion would be fulfilled, and the coming of the Mes-

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siah and the ultimate restoration to Palestine brought that much closer. In furtherance of his plan to open England to Jewish settlement, he submitted memorials to the English government and conferred with Oliver Cromwell in England personally for two years, from 1655 to 1657.

The mystical, messianic appeal of Manasseh did not fall altogether upon deaf ears. Some of the English sectarians were millenarians and yearned for the speedy return of the Christian savior; Harrington, the author of *Oceana*, was willing to settle all European Jews in Ireland—but not England; others, like Roger Williams, looked with tolerance if not with favor on God's Chosen People. But the canny merchants and the majority of the English clergy had no desire to encourage the readmission to England of commercially-minded Spanish Portuguese infidel Jews.

Cromwell, the Protector, was far more sympathetic. He had dealings with individuals among them and was prejudiced in their favor; he was not unconscious of the fact that these men, with their Caribbean connections, could do a great deal to stimulate English trade on the Spanish Main and help build the new Anglo-Saxon commercial state. The English Empire was growing rapidly; there were already colonies in North America, and in Bermuda and Barbados; Jamaica had just been taken, and Cromwell dreamt of annexing all of Spain's empire in America. The Jews, victims of the Inquisition, were inveterate enemies of Spain and logical allies of the English in their economic and political penetration of the West Indies. Cromwell was satisfied to use them for his purposes, and the Jews were his willing instruments. It was a Jamaican governor, a few

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years later, who summed up their importance when he wrote that it is the Jews who have "great stocks and correspondence; are not numerous enough to supplant us, nor is it to their interest to betray us [to the Spaniards]. Cannot find any but Jews that will adventure their goods or person to get trade."

It was very probably with an eye to the expansion of the British power in the West Indies that Cromwell encouraged the readmission of the Jews to England, and even though he was not able to accomplish his purpose legally, with his tacit acquiescence they now gained a foothold in England proper. Yet it was the Dutch, even more than the English, who took advantage of the Spanish, South American, and Mexican connections of these Iberian-Jewish *émigrés*. In spite of the bigotry and the jealousies of the Dutch clergy and merchants, the state authorities and the leaders of the West India Company sought to encourage the Jews because of their industriousness, their competence, and their skill in international commerce and trade.

As the Dutch, the English, and the French built and developed their colonies and commerce in the Western Hemisphere, individual *Sephardim* now emerged openly to engage in commerce as Jews. Many of these Marranos had been living clandestinely for generations in the Spanish-Catholic colonies. Originally they had migrated from Spain and Portugal to escape the Inquisition or to take advantage of the economic opportunities offered abroad. Some had sailed with Columbus, and by 1502 so many of these heretics had gone abroad that Spain forbade their further migration to its overseas provinces. These prohibitions were

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ineffectual, and when the Inquisition was formally established in Mexico in 1570, one of its prime functions was to root out Jewish heresy. By the middle of the seventeenth century large numbers of Jewish heretics faced trial in Mexico, and during some years more than a few of these Judaizers died at the stake. It has been estimated that nine hundred persons suspected of being tainted by Judaism were tried by the Spanish Inquisition in Mexico during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and there must have been hundreds of others who were never apprehended or even suspected. Some of the Marranos penetrated as far north as New Mexico. One of these, Bernardo López de Mendizábal, was no less a person than the governor himself. He came into conflict with the Inquisition, which charged him with Judaizing. The accusation was that he had changed his linen on the eve of the Sabbath after he had washed his feet. Mendizábal, a descendant of a known Judaizer, Juan Nuñez de León, finally died in prison.

In South America, Peru sheltered a large colony of Marranos who were faced with the same pitiless severity of the Inquisition after 1569. In a great auto-da-fé held in Lima on January 23, 1639, a number of these unfortunates were executed, among them the physician Francisco Maldonado de Silva. Encouraged by his father, Diego, young Francisco became a believing Jew, an ardent follower of his ancestral faith, but was denounced by a member of his own family and thrown into jail, where he was imprisoned for twelve years. It was this man who, facing death at the

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stake, proudly proclaimed: "And if I had a thousand lives, I would gladly lose them in the service of the living God."

Yet in none of the Spanish possessions was there an open, practicing, Jewish community, although it is by no means improbable that both in Mexico and in Peru the faithful met in secret conventicles to perform their Jewish rites. Conditions were no different in Portuguese Brazil, where New Christians, as they were called, were found as early as the first decade of the sixteenth century. The Portuguese government vacillated in its policy toward these suspected heretics. At times condemned New Christians were transported there; at other times they were forbidden entrance, but they continued to come. On the whole, Brazil was safer than Portugal; yet the Inquisition operated in this province through special agents, and suspected Judaizers and other heretics were sent back home for trial.

By 1624 the first break in this solid Catholic front occurred when Bahia was taken by the Dutch and a large crypto-Jewish group openly proclaimed its allegiance to Judaism. This was the first Jewish community in the Americas, but it was not destined to survive for long, for in the following year the Portuguese recaptured the city and many of these new Jews went underground again or fled for their lives.

It was not until after 1630 that a more permanent Jewish community was established, this time in Recife (Pernambuco). There were, as we know, New Christians already in this city; some had lived there for generations, clinging tenaciously and secretly to their faith. Others had come from other parts of Brazil; many, too, no doubt, from the



BAHIA OR SÃO SALVADOR IN BRAZIL, SCENE OF FIRST JEWISH
COMMUNITY IN THE WESTERN WORLD, 1624



Engraving by Zachariah W. Knight, approximately 1850

RECIFE OR PERNAMBUCO, CENTER OF JEWISH LIFE IN BRAZIL TO 1654

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neighboring Spanish provinces. Hundreds came from Holland directly, and in the course of a few years this port city received Jews from Poland, Hungary, Turkey, the Barbary states, as well as from Germany and Holland.

Recife Jewry soon developed a vigorous religious life. It had its own synagogues, two of them, and its own rabbis, among them the cultured Isaac Aboab, who later returned to Amsterdam. Most of these Jews were merchants, traders, and brokers; a few individuals attained great wealth. Quite a number of them were sugar planters and refiners owning their own mills; a few were professional men. There was an engineer among them and a practicing lawyer, Michael Cardoso, the first Jewish attorney in the Western world.

Unfortunately, the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652-54) made it very difficult for the Hollanders to protect Recife, and it was recaptured by the Portuguese in January, 1654. This marked the end of the Brazilian Jewish community. Under the liberal terms of the capitulation most of the Jews returned to Holland, to Amsterdam, which then sheltered the most cultured and prosperous Jewish community in the world, a prosperity built upon rights and liberties which in some respects exceeded even those which had been enjoyed by the fugitives in Dutch Brazil, from which they were fleeing.

Not all of Recife Jewry returned to the Netherlands; the surrender of 1654 created a Dutch colonial Jewish "Diaspora" which was to assume increasing importance with the passing of time. Some of the traders, eager to remain in the West Indies, fled to French Martinique and

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Guadeloupe, others to Jamaica and to English Barbados, where they furthered the sugar industry and the Negro slave economy which it created. The majority of those who remained in the area moved north to Dutch-ruled Surinam and Curaçao, where Jewish settlements had been established even before the Portuguese recapture of Recife. Others now settled in Cayenne and in other parts of Guiana.

One group of twenty-three Jews landed in September, 1654, in the village of New Amsterdam, on the Hudson. There is no way of knowing whether the coming of these men was carefully planned or was accidental. If this band deliberately set out for New Amsterdam, it was because they knew that it was an important commercial outpost of the West India Company, and they chose it in preference to returning home or settling in Surinam, Curaçao, or in other West India islands. There is, however, a late but plausible account which reports that this particular shipload of refugees was captured en route by Spaniards who, in turn, were driven off by a French privateer. It was this French boat that unloaded them on Manhattan Island.

But whether accidental or intentional, the arrival of the colony was but one phase of the steady movement of Jewish emigration from the East toward the West. Ever since the late Middle Ages the pendulum of migration had swung to the East. Now, stayed by the Cossack massacres of 1648 and the impenetrable iron wall of Russian exclusion, it slowly swung westward for almost three centuries until it was finally brought to a halt by the Johnson-Lodge

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Bill of 1924. The settlement of 1654 in this country, in this farthest western frontier post, was but one minor manifestation of the slow westward trek of the Jewish masses back into an enlightened European world that needed the Jew and, because it needed him, was willing, therefore, to tolerate him.

Chapter 2

New Amsterdam, 1654-1664

THE twenty-three Jews who sailed into New Amsterdam harbor on a September day in 1654 were to found the first Jewish community in what is today the United States. They were not the first of their folk in that town; at least one man had come there from Holland earlier in the summer for the purpose of carrying on trade. The careful historian soon comes to the unfailing rule that no Jew is ever the first Jew in any town: there is always one who had been there before him. The earlier settler in this case was Jacob Barsimson, an old-timer, who had been in the colony for the long period of two weeks!

It has been suggested, with some measure of plausibility, that Barsimson had been sent out by the Jewish leaders of Amsterdam to determine the possibilities of an extensive Jewish immigration to the new colony on the Hudson. With the fall of Dutch Brazil it was imperative for Jews planning to leave Europe to find other new homes.

These twenty-three Jews were described by an un-

friendly clergyman of New Amsterdam as being "poor and healthy." Certainly we need not question their poverty. Most of them had lost practically everything in their flight from Brazil; the encounter with the hostile Spanish ship had not added to their possessions, and they had to pay their rescuer, the "St. Charles," a French privateer, for the expensive trip to their new home on the Hudson. It was a journey of at least four months. They were in fact so impoverished that the local Dutch officials were fearful that many of them would be dependent on the deaconry, the local church-administered charity, for support during the coming winter.

Peter Stuyvesant, the governor, was irascible and narrow-minded. Certainly he did not like Jews. He made every effort to rid the colony of the unwelcome guests, but Amsterdam Jews rallied to their support. In a formal memorial they pointed out to the Directors of the West India Company, in classical mercantile terms, that: "Yonder land is extensive and spacious. The more of loyal people that go to live there, the better it is in regard to the population of the country as in regard to the payment of various excises and taxes which may be imposed there, and in regard to the increase of trade, and also to the importation of all the necessaries that may be sent there."

These were arguments the wealthy Directors understood; particularly since it was also noted "that many of the Jewish nation are principal shareholders in the company," and it was not loath to increase the Jewish capital in the company. They were primarily interested in financial returns, so they approved the request of the Amster-

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dam Jews on February 15, 1655, and in April wrote to the stubborn Stuyvesant: "These people may travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company or to the community, but be supported by their own nation." The Jews could remain, but they would have no right to expect the local Christian community to support the Jewish poor, as it had done the previous winter. The Jews not only understood perfectly, but also had no desire to fall back upon Christian charity.

The intentions of the Directors of the West India Company were unmistakable; nevertheless, Stuyvesant and his Council did their best to convince their superiors, and that failing, to nullify the instructions of their superiors. They tried, for example, to prevent the handful of local Jews from trading with the Indians on the Delaware and on the Hudson. The Jewish leaders in New Amsterdam thereupon appealed to Stuyvesant and his Council:

29 November, 1655.

To the Honorable Director General and Council of New Netherland:

With due reverence, Abraham DeLucena, Salvador Dandrada, and Jacob Cohen, for themselves and in the name of others of the Jewish nation, residing in this city, show how that under date of the 15th of February, 1655, the Honorable Lords Directors of the chartered West India Company, masters and patrons of this province, gave permission and consent to the petitioners, like the other inhabitants, to travel, reside, and trade here, and enjoy the same liberties, as appears by the document here annexed.

They therefore respectfully request that your Honorable

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Worships will not prevent or hinder them herein, but will allow and consent that, pursuant to the consent obtained by them, they may, with other inhabitants of this province, travel and trade on the South [Delaware] River of New Netherland, at Fort Orange [Albany], and other places situate within the jurisdiction of this government of New Netherland. Which doing, etc., the undersigned shall remain

Your Honorable Worships' humble servants,

Abraham DeLucena, Salvador Dandrada, Jacob Cohen.¹

This appeal was turned down. One concession, however, was made. Since the petitioners had already shipped some merchandise down the Delaware, they were permitted to send two men to sell the goods, and then return promptly.

Salvador Dandrada, the second signer of the above appeal, attempted the very next month to purchase a home for himself. This, too, was denied him. Thereafter, in the spring of the following year, the Jewish community appealed, in formal fashion, to the local authorities. It is to be noted that the petition is direct. It takes as established the right to trade and own homes, and it does not appeal for these rights to be conferred, but rather implemented. The argument offered regarding taxes, assessed against all residents, for outer defense works for protection from the Indians, is buttressed in other documents by the fact that seven Jews, constituting about one-thirtieth of the tax-list, paid about one-twelfth of this tax.

Here is the formal petition:

14 March [1656].

To the Honorable Director General and Council of New Netherland:

The undersigned suppliants remonstrate with due reverence

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to your Noble Honorable Lords that for themselves, as also in the name of the other Jews residing in this province, they on the 29th of November last past exhibited to your Noble Honorable Lordships a certain order of the Honorable Lords Directors of the chartered West India Company, dated February 15, 1655, whereby permission and consent was given them, with other inhabitants, to travel, live, and traffic here and to enjoy the same liberty. And following which they humbly requested that your Noble Honorable Lordships should be pleased not to hinder them but to permit and consent that they, like other inhabitants of this province, may travel and trade to and upon the South [Delaware] River, Fort Orange [Albany], and other places within the jurisdiction of this government of New Netherland.

Regarding which your Noble Honorable Worships were then pleased to apostille [declare officially]: For weighty reasons this request, made in such general terms, is declined; yet having been informed that the suppliants have already shipped some goods, they are for the time being allowed to send one or two persons to the South River in order to dispose of the same, which being done they are to return hither.

Also your Noble Honors were pleased, under date of December 23d following, to refuse the conveyance of a certain house and lot bid in by Salvador Dandrada at public auction, and as a consequence to forbid and annul the purchase, so that the said house was again offered for public sale anew on the 20th of January following, and sold to another.

And whereas the Honorable Magistrates of this city have been pleased to demand, through their secretary and court messenger, of the undersigned suppliants, individually, the sum of one hundred guilders, towards the payment for the works [fortifications] of this city, amounting alone for the undersigned, your Worships' suppliants, to the sum of 500 guilders, aside from what the others of their nation have been ordered to contribute;



MODEL OF NEW AMSTERDAM IN 1660

New Amsterdam, 1654-1664

Therefore your suppliants once more humbly request hereby that your Honors permit them if, like other burghers, they must and shall contribute, to enjoy the same liberty allowed to other burghers, as well in trading to all places within the jurisdiction of this government as in the purchase of real estate, especially as this has already been consented to and permitted by the Honorable Lords Directors [in Amsterdam], as can be seen by the aforesaid order [of February 15, 1655] shown to your Honors on November 29th. Then they are willing and ready, with other burghers and inhabitants, to contribute according to their means. Which doing, etc.

Your Worships' humble servants,

Abraham DeLucena, Jacob Cohen Henricque, Salvador Dandrada, Joseph d'Acosta, David Frera.²

Stuyvesant's reply was somewhat surly. He justified the taxation on the ground that the petitioners participated in the common benefit and protection of the fortifications. He alluded to the limited economic privileges as though to imply that the Jews thereby had sufficient rights. And, finally, he continued to refuse them permission to own real estate, but grudgingly informed them that this matter would be referred to the Company authorities in the mother country.

Back in Holland, on June 14, 1656, the Directors, displeased with the shilly-shally, categorically ordered Stuyvesant and his cohorts to permit the Jews to trade and to buy real estate. But they were not to be permitted to have open retail shops, to practice crafts, or to conduct public synagogal services. Yet, it may be assumed that quiet religious assemblies took place in private homes.

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It was further suggested that the Jews build their houses "close together," but the choice of the neighborhood was left to them. It was, of course, a suggestion to create a ghetto.

The following year, one of the original twenty-three settlers, Asser Levy, instituted a court action. Levy was a butcher. It is likely that he served as the *shohet*, or slaughterer of animals, for the local Jewry, for the records reveal that he was excused from killing hogs. Perhaps prophetically, Levy built his slaughterhouse on what is today Wall Street.

The background of the court action was this: about a year and a half previously, in November, 1655, Levy and Jacob Barsimson had wanted to keep "watch and ward"; the authorities had at first arbitrarily excluded Jews from this military service on the ground that the trainbands were unwilling to serve with them; nevertheless, they imposed a special tax on Jews in lieu of the military service from which they had been barred. Levy and Barsimson were unable to pay the tax, but they were willing to serve. Initially their specific request was refused, but ultimately it was granted, so that the two had been keeping watch and ward for some time.

Levy coupled his military service with the fact that Jews in the mother country were accepted as burghers. Accordingly, he sought, on April 11, 1657, to be admitted as a burgher. The New Amsterdam court rejected his petition.

Thereupon the Jews of the community appealed once more to the Director General, Stuyvesant:

New Amsterdam, 1654-1664

[April, 1657].

To the Noble Worships, the Director General and Council of New Netherland:

We, the undersigned of the Jewish nation here, make known, with due reverence, how that one of our nation [Asser Levy] repaired to the City Hall of this city and requested of the Noble Burgomasters that he might obtain his burgher certificate, like other burghers, which to our great surprise was declined and refused by the Noble Burgomasters, and,

Whereas the Worshipful Lords [in Amsterdam] consented under date of February 15, 1655, at the request of our nation, that we should enjoy here the same freedom as other inhabitants of New Netherland enjoy, as appears from the petition here annexed;

Further, that our nation enjoys in the city of Amsterdam in Holland the burgher right, and he who asks therefor receives a burgher certificate there, as appears by the burgher certificate hereto annexed; also that our nation, as long as they have been here, have, with others, borne and paid, and still bear, all burgher burdens;

We, therefore, reverently request your Noble Worships to please not exclude nor shut us out from the burgher right, but to notify the Noble Burgomasters that they should permit us, like other burghers, to enjoy the burgher right, and for this purpose to give us the customary burgher certificate, in conformity with the order of the Worshipful Lords Directors above mentioned. Upon which, awaiting your Noble Worships' gracious and favorable apostille [endorsement], we shall remain, as heretofore,

Your Noble Worships' humble servants,

Salvador Dandrada, Jacob Cohen Henricques, Abraham DeLucena, Joseph d'Acosta.³

In reply, under the date of April 20, 1657, Stuyvesant and the Council authorized the Burgomasters of New Am-

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sterdam to admit the Jews who lived in the town to the rights of burghership.

These Jews were constantly and consciously struggling for more civil and political rights and for broader religious freedom. Their successes obtained benefits not only for themselves but also opened the door for other disenfranchised groups. The intolerant Stuyvesant, writing to the Directors in Amsterdam in October, 1655, had thought of this too: "Giving them liberty, we cannot refuse the Lutherans and Papists."

But being accepted as burghers apparently did not give the Jews complete rights and liberties. The official atmosphere in New Amsterdam was still hostile. Perhaps that is why many of the refugees who had found shelter in New Amsterdam in September, 1654, seized an early opportunity to remove to Holland. New Amsterdam offered them the hazards of colonial life in a remote town among an intolerant citizenry where they had to struggle to win the privileges of trading with the Indians, of selling at retail, of owning property, and of standing guard with the trainbands. Under the Dutch in New Netherland, they were not allowed to work at any craft except that of butcher, and that only because of their demand for kosher meat. In this province, where even Christian dissenters were exposed to religious disabilities and brutal violence, prospective Jewish settlers were invited to live in a ghetto of their own making, were permitted no civic office or honor, and were forbidden to hold public religious services.

The Dutch possessions in the West Indies and in Guiana offered considerably more liberty, and it was there rather

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than to New Netherland that Jews, emigrating from the fatherland, preferred to go. For several more years New Amsterdam remained a Dutch colony; how uninviting it was is to be judged from the circumstance that occasional Jews drifted in but they did not come in numbers.

In 1664, the English sailed into the Hudson and captured New Amsterdam. It then became New York.

Chapter 3

New York, 1664-1755

THE terms of the capitulation which the English imposed when they took New Amsterdam may be described as liberal. The rights which the Jews had laboriously won from the Dutch were maintained. But they were expected to conform to the old-world guild restrictions which forbade them to engage in retail trade or to practice a craft.

Yet onerous as these and other disabilities seem now, they were in reality not very formidable. The Jews were not interested in such matters as converting their Christian neighbors; they were too busy trying to make a living to aspire to public office; and in place of the prohibited public worship they were quite satisfied to hold private religious services in a home or in the obscurity of some rented room. They needed no urging to live off by themselves for mutual comfort and for socio-religious relations, like other religious and ethnic groups. The Jews would have congregated together even if they had not been invited to do so.

Furthermore, they practiced their crafts if they possessed

them—and no one in this raw young country stopped them, for craftsmen were in great demand. Jews married out of the faith and nothing was done. Gradually they began to change their names. Just as the Sephardic Añes family in the days of Elizabeth and Drake emerged as the Ames family, so Saul Pardo (“brown”) blossomed forth as Saul Brown. Most of the restrictions were either of no great consequence, or else existed only on paper, and Jews were not forced to notice them.

But they were always ready to do battle for the elementary civil liberties which they needed in order to survive. “Food to eat and a garment to wear,” these were important. They had fought for the right to stand guard, not only because some of them were too poor to pay the tax imposed on Jews in lieu of military service, but also because it was bound up with the burgher license, which in turn was tied up with the privileges of denization. They could not forego their right to do business.

The injunction against Jews in the open retail trade persisted stubbornly—here they were really competing with their Gentile neighbors—but it was sporadically disregarded in practice. And while this prohibition was sinking into disuse, the Jews found their outlet in trade on the Delaware and the Hudson, and even into New England.

There were no real changes when the English came in 1664, certainly not at first. Jacob Lucena continued to trade with the settlers or the Indians on the Hudson. He himself was an old settler. He had arrived in New Amsterdam in 1656, probably the son or brother of one of the

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first immigrants. He served an apprenticeship for several years, and then became a trader on his own account in 1670.

In that very year he ran into trouble across the border in Connecticut, when he was tried in Hartford and found guilty of having been "notorious in his lascivious dalliance and wanton carriage and profers to severall women." The Court of Assistants fined him £20 and threatened him with a severe flogging if he failed to pay. We may safely assume that the penalty and the threat contributed to the cooling of his ardor. Twenty pounds was a huge fine, and he immediately appealed his case.

Two days later the general court abated half of the sum imposed, because he was a Jew!

Is it possible that they did not expect a Jew to live on the same high moral plane as a Christian? They were hardly that naive, for they were certainly conscious of the fact that Connecticut's moral standards were anything but high. The very page of the Connecticut record that reports Lucena's lust also recounts the fate of a Negro slave who died as the result of an "immoderate" flogging. The last three decades of the century had witnessed a change or even a decline in morals. Perhaps this was due to the immigration of people who were unsympathetic to the Puritan standards, or to the strong reaction among the older settlers to the prurient censorship of the magistrates and ministers. Drunkenness and sexual vice by this time had become common in Connecticut and New England. It is far more probable that the Connecticut judges cut the fine in half because, in being a Jew, Lucena was one of God's Chosen People.

But ten pounds was still too much to pay, consequently our Don Juan appealed to Asser Levy, whom we have spoken of before. Levy wielded sufficient influence to have the penalty again halved, and no doubt Lucena paid the five pounds.

Several years later, in 1678, Lucena encountered some new difficulty. Specifically he was prohibited from sending a load of goods up the Hudson to a place known then as Esopus, and now as Kingston. This prohibition was discriminatory and affected his livelihood; Lucena therefore was moved to protest:

To the Right Hon'ble S'r Edmund Andros, Kn[igh]'t, Leif-[tenan]'t, and Governor Gen'all of all His Roy'll Highnesses Territoryes in America, etc.:

The humble peticon of Jacob Lucena, etc., sheweth that yo'r peticon'r hath been a dweller in this collony by the space of twenty-two yeares and upwards, hath served an apprenticeship and been a trader for himselfe by the space of eight yeares and upwards, and hath kept house, fire and candle, watching and training, and hath had the privilidge to trade to Albany and Esopus without any lett or hindrance, as other traders and dealers have done.

And now, not doubting of the like privilidge, and being ignorant of any law or ord[inanc]'e prohibitting the same, your peticon'r hath entered sundry goods and merchandize in the custom house for Albany and Esopus, for w[hi]'ch he hath p'd the custome, obtained his clearing, and shipped them on board the sloop "Beverwick" bound to sa'd places, but is not suffered to goe without a passe from yo'r Hono'r, the w[hi]'ch if not obtained will be very pr'judicall to yo'r peticon'r, he haveing sundry debts due to him in those places

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w[hi]'ch now he might receive, and the sloop staying on his charge [being held up at his expense].

Your peticon'r therefore humbly prayes yo'r Hono'r to grant him y'r Hono'r's passe to goe to Albany and Esopus to deale and trade.

And yo'r peticon'r shall ever praye, etc.

August, 1678.

[Jacob Lucena.] ⁴

Lucena finally received the pass to take his goods up the river, but it cost him a shilling over £12.

Why did he not get it in the first place? To understand this it is necessary to discuss the complex question of "citizenship" with which the right to trade was closely related, at least in New York City.

Under the Navigation Acts of 1660 and their later supplements, it was almost imperative for an alien in England or the colonies to be "denizened," or else "naturalized," in order to carry on business as a merchant-shipper, particularly if engaged in trade with distant colonies. (Jews *born* in the colonies, the sons of aliens, were as free as if born in England, insofar as the payment of customs and duties was concerned.)

"Citizenship" was obtained to a greater or lesser degree through denization, through naturalization, or through the freedom of the city. "Letters patent of denization" were granted by the ruler or by one of his provincial governors, and permitted the recipient to engage in business. Such permission might be only temporary and consequently revocable, so that one may say that denization was a lesser form of naturalization.

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Naturalization, then, was preferable to denization, and was conferred by an act of Parliament in England, or through the agency of an American provincial assembly or court. It was an extension of denization, and it carried more privileges with it. Yet even naturalization did not confer political rights which were separately defined in charters and provincial laws; these were frequently dependent upon landed wealth and religious affiliation.

"Freedom of the city" was accorded by a municipality, rather than by a ruler or one of his lieutenants. In New York it carried with it the right to sell at retail and to exercise a handicraft, trade, or occupation.

There was no logical, carefully thought out, consistent scheme in the various types or degrees of "citizenship," and there was no uniformity in the delimitation of the rights. These modes of "citizenship" had grown up more or less independently of each other, with different historical antecedents, and, what is more to the point, they applied differently between the petitioner and the grantor. Accordingly, a Jew might vote in one colony on the basis of his "rights" but be disenfranchised in another colony with practically the same "rights." In particular it should be noted that rights granted in the English colonies were not honored at the equivalent level in England.

Where then did the Jew actually stand in this welter of similar but conflicting degrees of citizenship? Unlike his competitor or neighbor, he was not permitted to break completely the chains that shackled him to a medieval status.

The economic and political "charter" in the colony of

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New York was the letter of the West India Company ordering Stuyvesant to allow the Jews to travel to the colony and to trade in it. This was in essence a *privilegium*, a charter of limited rights such as Jewry had been accustomed to receive ever since the days of the Persian Empire, at least 2,000 years before.

The prohibitions in this "charter," such as the denial of the right to keep a shop and to sell at retail, stemmed from the traditional guild restraints imposed on Jewry in Europe. The Jews, at least in New York, were second-class burghers, citizens with circumscribed economic liberties. They had the freedom of the city; but it is significant that though they were called burghers and were formally granted burgher rights by the Dutch, they are not found, in the late 1650's, in the official list of the "freemen" of the town.

The position of New York Dutch and English colonial Jewry in the seventeenth century followed the contemporaneous European pattern of compromise. On the one hand, the guild, craft, and trade restrictions remained; on the other hand, the developing mercantilism persuaded states and trading companies to tolerate Jews in the interest of commerce and industry. The colonial scene seemed favorable for an expansion of privilege. Jews were prepared to grasp the opportunity. They directed their attention not primarily at the repeal of limiting laws but at the functional exercise of rights officially denied them. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. There was progress, thanks to indifference on the part of their putative opponents; with enough economic opportunity for all, there was no compulsion to restrict Jews.

Occasional setbacks, to be sure, occurred all through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The case of Rabba Couty, a New York Jewish burgher, is an example. In 1671 he sent his ketch, the "Tryall," into Jamaican waters, but the Court of Admiralty there, deeming him an alien because he was a Jew, confiscated his boat and cargo. He appealed to London. The Council for Trade and Plantations found (1672) that the New York burgher was not an alien and that by virtue of his colonial grant of denization he was a "free citizen" and was lawfully engaged in trade under the terms of the Act of Navigation.

The incident in 1678, of Jacob Lucena and trade on the Hudson, is another example. But the matter is even more complicated, for Lucena was initially prohibited from doing what the "charter" of 1655 expressly permitted Jews to do.

The right to trade on the River was also a privilege inherent in the freedom of the city. In all probability Lucena had not been formally made a freeman of the town; therefore the strict letter of the law could have been applied to him. Similarly, in 1685, "Rabbi" Saul Brown was not allowed to open a shop at retail, because the authorities thought it proper on this occasion to hold him, too, to the letter of the law. And similarly a generation later—in 1737—during the heat of the controversy over a contested seat in the New York Assembly, Jews were forbidden to vote for candidates, although we know they voted before this and were certainly voting again in 1761.

The issue was apparently decided in the Naturalization Act of 1740, as a result of which it was possible for every

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Jew in the colonies to become naturalized. But even the Act of 1740 was not definitive as far as the Jews were concerned, for it was blithely ignored years later in liberal Rhode Island, as we shall see. There, despite the Act, a man who was to become a distinguished American Jew was refused the privilege of naturalization.

Why, to return to our question, did Sir Edmund Andros, or one of his agents, stop Jacob Lucena from taking his load of goods up to Esopus? It may have been a legally justified action on the part of some official aware of the fact—or informed of it by some kind competitor—that Lucena was not a freeman of the town. Maybe at this moment the authorities were eager to direct Jews into foreign trade and to reserve the less hazardous gains of local trade for fellow-Christians. Possibly Lucena had, *de facto* at least, the rights of a freeman, but no letter of denization, and thereupon the crown official took the opportunity to mulct him. Or, maybe, the only reason he was held up was that some officer wanted the £12 . . . and got it.

With this background we can understand why Jacob and David Robles immediately petitioned the king's agent for letters of denization upon their arrival at New York in 1687. Unless they could avoid being classed as "aliens," they would have to pay heavy duties on personal belongings and on the load of goods on their ship.

These newcomers were political and religious refugees from France, but were they Jews? The name Robles was well known among Jews in the seventeenth century. A Marrano—a secret Jew—of that name had been arrested in Mexico City in the first half of the century; in 1656 an-

other Robles had been the key figure in a test case which was to decide that Jews were permitted to remain in England legally; later we find the name borne by settlers in Jamaica and in Surinam, and by martyrs in Madrid. Were they of the same family, and related to each other? It is difficult to determine.

In all probability, Jacob and David Robles were victims of the order of Louis XIV issued in 1685 revoking the Edict of Nantes and exiling non-Catholics. Some of the Huguenots who were forced to flee went to South Carolina. It seems likely that the Robleses were Protestant Marranos who as "Protestants" had been compelled to leave France and had finally come to New York.

Here is their request for letters of denization:

Province
of New York.SS

To the Hon'ble Anthony Brockholls Esq'r and the rest of His Majesties Council of the Province:

The humble petition of Jacob Robles and David Robles humbly sheweth that your pet'rs being forced by the late desencion in the kingdome of Ffrance, where they were inhabitants, to depart from thence, are with their ffamilys and some necessarys for husbandry come to this province with designe to plant and setle here, but are informed that being aliens borne they are incapeable of holding and enjoying lands unless they be first denizis'd.

May it therefore please your Hon'rs to grant unto yo'r pet'rs lett'rs of denizacion to enable them to setle and emprove here accordingly, and also to grant th't yo'r pet'rs may be permitted to receive their goods and necessarys afores'd now on board the ship "Phenix," James Dunham, M[aste]'r, they paying such dutys for the same as others [of] his Maj'ties sub-

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jects of this province in like cases do, and yo'r pet'rs as in duty bound shall ever pray, etc.

Monday 5 Dec'r, 1687.⁵

If they were bona fide farmers, then they were one of the few Jewish families who became planters. Evidently their petition for the right of denization was granted, in part at least, for David Robles crops up in the records in the next decade.

Several months after the Robles family, fleeing from French persecution, arrived in New York, the League of Augsburg went to war against Louis XIV. A number of the European states were offended by his brutal revocation of the Edict of Nantes and, what is more to the point, were jealous and fearful of his great power. This European war, beginning in 1688, was to initiate a succession of conflicts that was not to end till the fall of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century. On the American frontier the counterpart of this initial European struggle expressed itself in the massacres, border raids, and petty engagements known in our histories as King William's War (1689-1697).

Here, across the vast stretches that separated them, the French and English eyed one another warily, watchful and jealous, each determined to dominate the lucrative fur trade that already extended northward from the lower Mississippi to the barren wastes of Hudson Bay.

In this, the first of the wars between the French and the English on the American continent, the French, as the first step in their planned conquest of the continent, set out to

harry the New England and New York frontiers. In line with this scheme, the troops of Frontenac and their Indian allies surprised the outpost village of Schenectady in February, 1690, burnt it to the ground, killed dozens of their helpless victims, and dragged many others into a bitter captivity. In revenge for this massacre, and as part of a larger English counter-plan for the capture of Canada, a British expeditionary force was sent against the French to the north. However, because of faulty organization, poor food, and the prevalence of the dreaded smallpox, the would-be invaders never got beyond the southern end of Lake Champlain. They failed even to penetrate the enemy's stronghold. Other New York troops remained at home to guard the harbor against privateers, pirates, and any possible attack by the enemy. The war expended itself in futility, accomplishing little or nothing for either side.

For the student of American Jewish history this war is interesting because in it appeared one of the first Jews who bore arms as a soldier in British North America. He was Joseph Isacks.

This worthy was not the first of his people to shoulder a gun in the western world. The story of Jews in the armed forces of the North American lands goes back to the days when the Marrano smith, Hernando Alonso, fought with Cortés in Mexico, only to die at the stake as a Jewish heretic in 1528. Over a hundred years later, as we saw above, the Jewish burghers kept watch and ward on the walls of New Amsterdam. But among the British forces in what is today the United States, Isacks appears to have been the first.

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Isacks, it would seem, was always a poor man or at most of modest means. By trade he was a butcher; but unlike Asser Levy, the butcher of previous decades, Isacks' chosen trade did not bring him any great success. When the synagogue was being built a generation later he contributed £1.10, contrasted with the gift of £25 of a Jacob Franks. Isacks maintained interest in the synagogue down to his death in 1737 at the age of seventy-eight.

He enlisted in the militia some time before 1690. We do not know whether he marched north with the invaders in the summer of 1690, or whether he remained at home to guard the city. But a minor calamity befell him which threatened to cost him some money he could ill afford; therefore he wrote a letter to a military superior appealing for help:

To the Honor'ble Richard Ingoldesby, Comander in Cheif of their Maj'tys Province of New York and Dependencies and the Honor'ble Council:

The humble petition of Joseph Isacks, humbly sheweth that yo'r petition'r, willing to doe their Maj'tys all the service he could in those late troublesome times, listed himself under Major McGregorie, and being att want for a gunn was supplied by Capt. Wm. Merritt, which gunn was taken by Thomas Clerk out of yo'r petition'rs lodgeing, for what reason he, yo'r petition'r, knowes not, and now is dayly threatened by the said Capt. Merritt to pay for the s[ai]d gunn.

Therefore yo'r petition'r humbly prayers yo'r hono'rs in charitie to consider, and alsoe to ord'r that the said Clerk may restore to yo'r petition'r the said gunn, or the value thereof to Mr. Wm. Merritt, being as he, the said Merrett, pretends [claims] five pounds and yo'r petition'r shall pray. . . .

September 26, 1691.⁶

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During many of the years that Joseph Isacks went to services the "Rabbi" was Abraham DeLucena, a prominent merchant-shipper. Such arrangements were by no means unusual in Jewish life. Religiously any man is entitled to the privilege of leading the service; an ordained rabbi has no prerogative in this matter. Out on this Jewish frontier—the early American settlements—the readers were always laymen. When a congregation acquired some strength and numbers, a full-time *hazzan* or cantor was hired to officiate.

By the time Lucena volunteered his services during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, he had already had a number of predecessors; one of them we know by name, the merchant Saul Brown.

Lucena must have known some Hebrew or he would hardly have been selected as the lay reader. This is confirmed in general by a perhaps over-optimistic New York Anglican who declared at this time (1712-1713) that Hebrew could well be studied in New York, since it contained "a synagogue of Jews, and many ingenious men of that nation from Poland, Hungary, Germany, etc."

Abraham DeLucena, as his name would indicate, was probably a relative of the settler with the same name who had come in as early as 1655. By 1705 the younger Abraham was a prominent businessman in spite of the fact that he did not become a freeman for another three years. One of his daughters—he had five children—married a Mordecai Gomez, and this alliance brought him in close touch with the Gomez family, a wealthy and powerful clan with whom he was concerned in a number of ventures. Lucena traded with the Madeiras, importing wines; he sent grain

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to Europe during the War of the Spanish Succession, and with his business partner, a Gentile woman, he supplied the British army with wheat when it again invaded Canada in Queen Anne's time.

He also carried on an active trade with Jamaica—flour, bread, and bacon were the principal commodities he sent there. As pirates, storms, and treacherous coasts made every trip a hazard, merchant-shippers usually made out a will before embarking. Lucena's will was written before he sailed for Jamaica in 1716; in it he piously commended his "soul into the hands of the Almighty God of Israel, my Creator, trusting in his mercy for pardon of all my sins, and hoping for a joyful resurrection to life eternal." Fortunately, nothing serious happened to him on this journey, and he returned to survive his will for nine years.

The congregation of which Lucena was the leader had been enjoying freedom of religion since 1674. The Duke of York then instructed his Governor, Edmund Andros, to "permit all persons of what religion so ever, quietly to inhabit within the precincts of yo'r jurisdiction w'thout giving them any disturbance or disquiet whatsoever for or by reason of their differing opinion in matter of religion." This liberal order was confirmed in 1686. The small Jewish community of twenty families evidently took advantage of its opportunities; within the next decade—by 1695 at the latest—they already had a public synagogue on Beaver Street.

Lucena was officiating, as it were, over a duly organized and established congregation. Accordingly, he wanted certain privileges usually granted to clergymen and enjoyed

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by the previous "rabbis." Therefore he sent a petition to the New York authorities:

To his Excellency, Robert Hunter, Esq'r, Capt. Generall and Governor in Chiefe of the Provinces of New York, New Jersey, and Territories thereon depending in America, and Vice Admirall of the same, etc., in councill:

The humble petition of Abraham DeLucena, minister of the Jewish nation, resideing at the city of New York, sheweth that yo'r petitioner's predecessors, ministers of the Jewish nation, residing at the city of New York, by reason of their ministerial ffunction, have from time to time beene exempted by the government, not only from boarding any office[r] civil or military, within this city, but likewise beene excus'd from severall duties and services incumbent upon the inhabitants of this city.

Wherefore yo'r petitioner most humbly begs yo'r Excellencies care of him (in consideration of his ministeriall ffunction) that hee may likewise be excused from all such offices, duties, and services, and be allowed the like priviledges and advantages within this city, as have formerly beene granted to his said predecessors as ministers as aforesaid, and that yo'r Excellency will be pleased to give such directions in the premisses as to yo'r Excellency shall seem meet.

And yo'r Excellencies petitioner, as in duty bound, shall ever pray, etc.

Abraham DeLucena.

New York

13th Sept'r, 1710.⁷

In the following year, 1711, Lucena was one of seven Jews who contributed to the building of a steeple on Trinity Church in New York City. The amount of money was inconsequential; the action, however, is highly significant. During the same year the classic work of anti-

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Semitism, Eisenmenger's *Judaism Uncovered*, appeared in Europe; and in this same generation Jews were being burnt at the stake and quartered alive in Portugal and Poland. The gift for the steeple in New York is testimony to the development and flowering of an American spirit of tolerance, mutual aid, and community of feeling, a spirit so sharply in contrast with the hatred and venom still alive in Europe.

The close personal relations of six of these seven contributors reflects the solidarity, intimacy, and the common interest that characterized this small compact Jewish community. The six were Lucena, Gomez, Levy, Franks, Michaels, and Pacheco. Lucena and Gomez were united through the marriage of their children; Jacob Franks was a son-in-law of Moses Levy. A second Levy daughter was apparently affianced to a Michaels boy, for he left her a large sum of money in his will when he died. After his death she married a Seixas, and the Seixas' were related to the Pachecos.

That these early American Jews maintained close connections at home was inevitable, unless they were prepared to marry out of the faith. However, they also had relatives, "in-laws," and good friends in Lisbon, Amsterdam, Hamburg, London, the West Indies, and the North American colonies. And, of course, these friends had relatives. The obvious advantage of establishing family as agents in distant strategic markets and commercial centers was not first discovered by the Rothschilds. Jacob Franks, for example, was very likely a poor but competent relative sent out to the colonies by his rich kinfolk in England. All these inter-

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relationships combined to further the Jews in the export and import trade, a trade no doubt accelerated by the wars with France, the British conquest of Acadia and Newfoundland, and the expansion of English interests in the Caribbean. Luxuries, wines, slaves, and badly needed manufactured goods were brought to America, while wheat, tobacco, furs, timber, fish, and naval stores were sent back in exchange.

In this shipping-mercantile development, the Jewish merchants were disproportionately important. Several names now stand out: the Gomez', the Frankses, and particularly Moses Levy. The last-mentioned had come from England about the year 1702. Whether Levy was born in England or, as is probable, came to that country as an immigrant from Central Europe, is unknown. Family tradition, not always a safe guide, would have it that he brought money with him when he came here with an already growing family. Ultimately he was to marry twice and leave behind him, from both wives, twelve children, some of whom became the ancestors of very distinguished Jews in the generations to follow. One of his sons was the real founder of the Philadelphia Jewish community, another was one of the first Jews in Baltimore. A grandson of his, likewise named Moses Levy, was considered by Jefferson for a cabinet post. We have a portrait of the first Moses Levy, and it depicts a very dignified gentleman, dressed in the height of fashion, with his pet dog at his knee, and a sailing ship in the distance symbolically compassing the seas to bring him back wealth and possessions. He owned

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several vessels. One was the "Abigail," so named, we may be sure, as a compliment to a daughter.

That the merchant-shipper of that generation only too frequently suffered reverses is eloquently demonstrated in Levy's relations with Isaac Napthaly, a Rhode Island butcher who also aspired to be a merchant. By 1705, Napthaly, now in New York, had been granted the freedom of the city; the following year, while engaged in litigation of some sort, he succeeded in inducing Levy to become his bondsman. Two years later Napthaly ran up a debt with Levy in a commercial deal and then fled the country. He was probably hopelessly bankrupt and ran away to escape imprisonment for debt. Levy was now compelled to pay the bond and the costs of the suit, and he lost what he himself had advanced in goods and credits. All told, the fugitive cost him over £176, to say nothing of incidental expenses in the affair. Years later Levy heard that Napthaly had passed away, "in parts remote . . . beyond the seas, intestate," but he also heard that he did leave some small effects in New York. Accordingly, Levy petitioned Governor William Burnett for letters of administration as principal creditor, and received them; he probably salvaged very little of the original credits now due for almost fifteen years.

Here is the letter that he dispatched to the Governor:

To His Excellency, William Burnett, Esq'r, Capt. Generall and Governour in Cheife of the Provinces of New York, New Jersey, and Territories thereon depending in America, and Vice Admirall of the same, etc.:

The humble petition of Moses Levy of the city of New

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York, merch't, sheweth that your petitioner some time since haveing commerce and dealeings with one Isaac Naphthaly, late of the city of New York, merch't, deceased, upon a faire and just account, there remained due to your petitioner from the said Isaac Naphthaly, in the yeare 1708, and at the time of his decease, the sume of sixty-two pounds, ffourteene shillings, and eleaven pence, half penney, as by the acco't thereof, now ready to produce to your Excellency upon oath, may more fully appeare;

That in the yeare 1706 your petitioner, at the special instance and request of the said Isaac Naphthaly, was prevailed upon to become bayle for the said Isaac Naphthaly by recognizance in the Supream Court of this province, upon a certaine action commenced in the said court against him, the said Isaac, by one Jacob Nunes Fernandes, as by the said Isaac Naphthaly's counter bond to your petitioner, ready to produce to your Excellency, may also appeare;

That the said Isaac Naphthaly, afterwards absconding and leaveing this province, and judgement passing against him in the aforesaid action, your petitioner, as being bayle for him in the said action, was afterwards obliged to pay to the said Jacob Fernandes Nunes the sume of one hundred and thirteene pounds, eleaven shillings, and six pence, besides costs of suite very considerable, as by the receipt of Lewis Gomez, attorney for the said Jacob Nunes Fernandes, to your petitioner on the tenth of March, 1709, also ready to produce to your Excellency, may likewise appeare, which said sumes of money soe due to and paid by yo'r petitioner for and on acco't of the said Isaac Naphthaly, as aforesaid, amount in the whole to the sume of one hundred seaventy-six pounds, six shillings and ffive penie halfePENNY, besides considerable sumes which your petitioner was necesitated and obliged to pay and disburse for the charges of the aforesaid suite, the particulars whereof your petitioner cannot now remember, being soe many years ago and haveing lost or mislaid the receipts for such payments and

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disbursements, all which sumes are yet justly due and oweing to your petitioner from the estate of the said Isaac Naphthaly, your petitioner not haveing directly or indirectly as yet rece'd one penney upon account thereof;

That the said Isaac Naphthaly sometime agoe dyed in parts remote from this province beyond the seas, intestate, as your petitioner is advised, and in as much as your petitioner is lately advised there are some small effects belonging to the said Isaac Naphthaly at the time of his decease within this province, tho' very inconsiderable to your petitioner's demands upon his said estate,

Your petitioner most humbly prays yo'r Excellency will be pleased to grant to your petitioner letters of administration of the goods, rights, and creditts of the said Isaac Naphthaly as principle creditor to him as aforesaid.

And your petitioner shall ever pray, etc.

Moses Levy.

New York, the 10th November, 1721.⁸

By the first decade of the eighteenth century the little Jewish community in New York had come into its own. It had been English now for just about a generation. Most of the old disabilities under the Dutch had been sloughed off. The Jews were allowed to engage in the wholesale and retail trade, they practiced crafts, and were active as importers and exporters. As early as the year 1700, Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, governor of New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, had written back home to the Board of Trade "that, were it not for one Dutch merchant and two or three Jews that have let me have money, I should have been undone." Evidently a few of the Jewish merchants were already men of means.

The synagogue organization had certainly been created

in the time of the Dutch, probably within a few weeks after the landing of the first Jewish pilgrims in 1654. Now, in the early eighteenth century, they had, of course, their own cemetery; the cemetery nearly always precedes the synagogue in an emerging Jewish community. The congregation already called themselves the Remnant of Israel, Shearith Israel, and they had a fully developed constitution by no later than 1706. The place of public worship, however, was a rented room. After a number of years, they were ready to take the next step and erect their own building. They were, however, short of funds. Besides, there was an old Jewish practice to which they were undeviatingly faithful, as the following letter, originally in Spanish, reveals:

Illustrious Gentlemen: The *Parnassim* ["executives"], *Adjuntos* ["board members"] and other gentlemen of the *Mahamad* ["board"] of the Holy K. K. ["Congregation"] of the island of Jamaica, which the Almighty may increase and prosper for many years. Amen.

Most benevolent gentlemen:

We the undersigned, appointed *Parnassim* and *Adjuntos* of this holy K. K. of Shearith Jacob [Israel?] for the present year 5489 [1729], place before you this petition in the name of all the holy *Kaal* ["congregation"].

We earnestly request you all as well as your *haham* ["rabbi"] to communicate it to the members of your holy *Kaal*, so that they may contribute all they can to the building of a holy synagogue which we have decided with the help of God to erect. We have already purchased an appropriate site for the edifice and another for [another] cemetery, but for want of sufficient means, the *Yehudim* ["Jews"] here being but few, we have not been able to carry out our intention, and until

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our hopes are realized, we must continue for the present to congregate in a synagogue rented from a *goy* ["Gentile"].

May the Almighty grant our wish, and may He move your hearts that you may to the best of your ability assist us in the matter, and also help us to build a fence around the cemetery. And we will ever pray that you may prosper and increase in holy service. Amen.

From your servants and the assistants above-mentioned,

Luis Gomez, *Parnas*,

Daniel Gomez.

N. Y. 16 Sebeth, 5489 [January 16, 1729].⁹

The Gomez' who signed this appeal for funds were Marranos who had fled from Spain to France where, like the Robles', they remained till the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Fearful of the rising tide of reaction, they had then moved on to England, and finally to New York, where they were already settled by 1703. In the following year Luis (Lewis Moses Gomez), the head of the family, received from Queen Anne a patent of denization which permitted him to carry on business anywhere in the British colonies. Obtaining this beautifully engrossed piece of parchment was an expensive business: in addition to the cost of a trip to England, the legal fees, gratuities, and the like amounted to over £57.

Here in this country the family was soon widely known for their enterprise and success: they dealt in general merchandise, shipped large cargoes of wheat to Europe, and traded with the Indians. In pursuit of this Indian trade Luis and his sons built a stone trading post, about 1717, on a large tract of land in the Devil's Dance Chamber, about six or seven miles north of Newburgh, New York. The furs



NEW YORK CITY, ABOUT 1667



THE GOMEZ HOUSE NEAR NEWBURGH, N. Y.

THIS STONE TRADING POST, BUILT ABOUT 1717, WAS ORIGINALLY ONLY ONE STORY HIGH

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that were secured from the Indians and others were carried down to the foot of the hill, to the landing on the Hudson, and then shipped down river to New York City. The walls of the fortlike stone structure were two feet thick and the stones neatly fitted together without cement. This house is still standing, though enlarged. It is without doubt the oldest structure built and occupied by colonial Jews and still to be seen in this country. It was sold by the sons in 1748, several years after the death of their father.

Jacob, one of the six sons engaged in business with his father Luis, died tragically just a few years after the trading post was built. He had gone on a business trip to Cuba with a load of goods, and while the cargo was being landed a group of Spaniards surprised the crew, killed the captain, and cut Jacob Gomez to pieces. The fate of this New York Jewish merchant illustrates well the dangers to which supercargoes and seafaring merchants were exposed in those days. (His brothers later commemorated his death in one of their ships, the "Jacob.")

The effort to build the synagogue was successful; in 1730 the edifice on Mill Street was dedicated. The presidency, however, passed out of the hands of Luis Gomez into those of a "German" Jew. The president that year was Jacob Franks, one of the outstanding merchants of the New York of his day. He gave a great deal of his time and energy to the building of this house of worship, the first Jewish one erected on the continent of North America. It was a small structure, only about thirty-five feet square, but it meant a great deal to the little community.

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Jacob Franks had married a daughter of Moses Levy, Bilhah Abigail, usually known simply as Abigail. She was the daughter of Levy's first wife; Levy had married a second time, as mentioned above. The second wife, Grace Mears Levy, was widowed in 1728; subsequently she married David Hays.

Abigail had little regard for her stepmother; probably some difficulties in settling the estate of Moses Levy originated or increased the dislike.

Jacob and Abigail's oldest child was Naphtali, which Jewish tradition, based on Gen. 49:21, takes to mean "stag" or "hart," and hart in German is *Hirsch*. Like other German-Jewish families, the Frankses called their son Hirsch or Hart; Abigail called him "Heartsey."

Sometime before 1737 Naphtali "Heartsey" Franks was sent to London, where he was thoroughly prepared for the business world by the numerous brothers of his father. Young Franks left home probably in his teens; as far as we know, he never returned to the colonies. Ultimately he became a rich and powerful figure in the London Jewish community. Abigail kept in constant touch with her first-born through letters. This is what she wrote him in the summer of 1737:

Dear Heartsey:

I have three of your letters answered. The first of them brought us the melancholly acco[un]t of the death of that worthy and good man Mr. Is[aac]. Franks [your father's brother, d. 1736] wick truly was a very great shock, especialy to your father who for a long while had bin very uneasy on acc't of his [brother's] indiposition, and, as he very justly

fear'd, you had not given him a true information how ill he was. Sam. Myers brought a letter wick Uncle Asher's [Levy] had inclosed to him and befor he opened it tould him the sorrowfull contents. Y[ou]'r father seemed imoveable for some time. At last he broake out in a flood of tears. He was very melancholly for a long time, but now begins to be more settled.

For my part when I find a person has soe great a cause for greife I can say but little by way of releife, knowing nature has its call upon these occassions and nothing but time and reasson to aswage the dolor. You tell me I may geuss the concern you laboured under at the loss of soe tender a parent [your future father-in-law] and friend. I truly sampathized with you, but under that great misfourtune you had the satisfaction of imploying y[ou]'r indefatigable endeavours in discharg[ing] your last dutys to him in such a manner as procoured you the commendations of all his freinds. And I hope you still make it your endeavour in a strickt preseverance of regard and duty to his remains, for that is all wee have left to show our gratitude to the memory of soe kind a benefactor. He was but a very young man, "but in the grave there is noe inquisition wether a man be ten, twenty, or a hundred years ould." All the difference after death is a man's works here on earth, for that never dyes, and one that has left soe great and good a name may be said to have lived full of days and dyed in a good ould age.

I hope soe great an example of worth may be an emulation to all those that have the happyness to be his relations, to follow his steps in dischargeing their duty to God an man in the severall stages of life it shall please the All mighty to set them in.

I hope this may find you in company of all freinds in a happy state of health, and that happyness and long life may allways attend them. My best regards to Mr. Aaron Franks [your uncle] and Mrs. Franks; her son and daughter I sallute with my love.

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Your letter by Farmer was a sort of disappointment, for you write me that you had given Sim. Levy the 6 voll. of the magazines to send me, upon the strenght of wich I gave all my loose ones to Uncle Isaac Levy [my brother], but I have since reassumed my gift finding they are not sent by either of the ships. Uncle Isaac has bin here some time to make up his affairs with Mrs. [David] Hays [my stepmother], the per-ticulers of wich I refer you to [your brother] Moses's letter. Only this I must say: she is a base, vile woman, and her actions has allways bin of a peice, tho' I think in this last affaire she has outdon her ussall outdoings of malice and craft. If you see Uncle Asher [Levy], pray give my love to him and tell him if, as he thinks, he has bin ill-used and wishes revenge on his brothers, he has a sufficient one in the plague my father [Moses Levy] has intailed upon us here in New York by that woman.

By via Boston last night wee had the pleassure to heare from you and allso that Mr. Aaron Franks [your uncle] was returned from Bath in good health. Your first letter that makes mention of his being out of town allarmed y[ou]'r father very much, for you don't directly tell him he was gon to Bath but down to Somersetshire, in wich part of the country Bath lyes, wich he knowing, and allsoe that it was not a proper season to travell, made him very uneassy, but y[ou]'rs last night made all things well again. I was pleas'd with the trust y[ou]'r uncle reposed in you dureing his absence being it confirms my wishes and opinions of your good conduct.

I am sensibly concern[ed] at wath happened in y[ou]'r Uncle Abraham [Franks's] family with regard to his daughter. But it's wath I allways expected, for they will not consent [by providing liberal dowries] to let them have husbands because the Jews with best fourtunes will not have them, so they can't blame 'em if they chuse for themselves. I am really concerned for y[ou]'r uncle and wish him better luck with his other daughters. Pray give my humble service to him and family.

I answered his wife's letter by via Bristoll wich I hope she has rece[ive]'d before now; att the same time I wrote to Mrs. Franks and Mrs. Sallomons [other aunts].

I can't tell what should be the reasson the pickoles should be spoilt, unless the vinegar runs of[f] while they are on board [ship], or else the[y] are to[o] long in the cold and soe freeze. For I keep of the very same for my own use and they allways keep good untill the return of the season, except this year, and then it was a generall callamity, for the weather was soe cold that everything frooze and soe of consequence spoilt. However I shall send you some agin this year wich hope may prove better. The silks you sent are very dear, but give my service to Sim. Levy and tell him the tea was very good.

You'll observe I sit down to write in a hurry by the incorrectness of my letter, for I put things down just as they occur to my memory. I have very often designed to answer a letter as soon as received in order to have some method, but as I hate write[in]'g I can't perswade my self to take soe much time. However, I would have you b'leive you have all the share in my thoughts that a constant series of thinking can infuse in a mind that is allways anxious for your happyness, and should think it a blessing if it was in my power by any thing else but wishes to let you know the place you deservedly have in the heart of a tender parent.

Our little congregation affords variety of news and tattle, but as I never am concerned I don't care to trouble my self nor you with it but refer you to Moses's [your brother's letter] who will acq[uaint]. you with some.

You complain of Cap. Clark and he makes the same of you that you never came near him. I shall be very glad of some of y[ou]'r long epistles, and allsoe that you would send us some little amusements wich you have bin very remiss of off late. I sent for *The Honest Yorkshireman* [a farce by Henry Carey] and some other things wich you have not sent. Pray send me the 2d voll. of the *Revolution of Poland* [by Abbé Desfon-

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taines]; the first you sent some time agoe; allsoe 2 bottles of the best Scoth snuff for my own use, and 2 pr. spectacles of the very best.

I have endeavoured by a sort of medly to make a long letter for wich I'll make noe excuse, but would have you take it as a testimony of the pleassure I take in saying something to you, and lett this assure you that I am, dear child,

Your most affectionate mother,
Abigaill Franks.

Pray give my love to Mrs. Salomons [your aunt] and Coz'n David [Salomons] and tell them if I should miss writting to them by this [boat], I shall certainly give my self the pleassure of doeing it by Bryant [on the next boat].

New York, June the 5th, 1737.

To Naphthaly Franks.¹⁰

Abigail Franks is the first American Jewess we really know well, for enough of her letters to Heartsey in London have been preserved. She was not a remarkable woman . . . but an interesting one.

Abigail Levy Franks was never called upon to play a heroic role. She was the daughter of a substantial merchant, married to a prosperous businessman who daily grew in prestige and who, apparently, never experienced any serious financial reverses. She was born in an England which now gave its Jews every opportunity to rise, at least in the economic world. A child of the British world with its budding tolerance and of the English colonial lands with their ever-expanding liberties, she faced the future.

Her tongue was English, her script the roman, and she knew and quoted Dryden, Montesquieu, and Pope. She devoured the newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets of the

day, read books, and enjoined upon her sons the duty of reading and studying every day while they were still young and the leisure was theirs. She saw that they were taught the painting and the music and the good manners that were expected of the children of the wealthy who moved in the magic circle of the titled and the politically powerful. Politics appealed to her, and she followed the struggle for power in New York between the DeLanceys and the Clintons with intelligence . . . but at a safe distance. There was no room for the Jew in official positions, not in that generation.

She was no business woman, but then there was no need. She loved gossip, but for all that she was a person of high moral character, spicing her warm human letters with apt hortatory and ethical admonitions. Her children were her life, and if, unlike many women in the ghettos of continental Europe, she did not have to labor for them, she loved them no particle less. She lived and worried for her children with all the intensity of the traditional Jewish mother. Though apparently untutored in Hebraic and Yiddish sources, she was no less intensely Jewish. Unflinchingly loyal to her faith, she was ready to sacrifice herself by sending her beloved children across the sea, to distant England, to a large Jewish community, rather than expose them to intermarriage with Gentiles . . . yet her closest friends were Christians and she was a welcome guest in their homes. She wrote of herself as a "patriot"; this land was "our country," but she could never reconcile herself to intermarriage; she was determined to live and die a Jewess.

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The letters which Abigail and Jacob Franks wrote their eldest son permit us to gauge the ramifications of the business activities of this far-flung family. They were, in all probability, the most important Jewish business concern in the American colonies from 1730 to 1770. Naphtali, a seasoned man of affairs before he was thirty years of age, was closely associated with his father in all their ventures, bringing to him and the firm all the advantages of a resident purchasing and sales agent in London, then the greatest commercial and industrial center in the world.

Jacob Franks was engaged in general commerce and shipping. On occasion he imported household servants, Negro slaves. Over a period of years, from 1717 to 1743, he brought twelve, mostly from the West Indies. Similar small lots were imported by Pacheco, the Gomez', and Moses Levy.

New York Jewry was not active in this traffic, not because of any scruples, but because this commodity more properly concerned the rum-distilling Rhode Islanders and the rice and indigo planters of South Carolina. A large firm in the latter state would import more slaves in one year than all New York merchants would bring in in one generation. From 1715 to 1743 the New York Jewish shippers and their Gentile partners imported fewer than eighty slaves. There was one notable exception. In 1717 and 1721, the "Crown" and the "New York Postillion"—owned by Nathan Simson and his New York and London associates—sailed into the northern harbor with a total load of 217 Negroes. The shipments came directly from the African

coast, two of the largest slave cargoes to be brought into New York in the first half of the eighteenth century.

Much of the business of the Franks family was influenced by the second Hundred Years' War between England and France. The conflict began in 1689 and had as its goal the hegemony of England in Europe and India, and the conquest of Canada and the trans-Allegheny region to the Mississippi. The Frankeses were developing close business relations with the English government. During the period of the French and Indian War (1755-1763), if not before, they became official purveyors and agents for the British Crown in the American colonies, working in close harmony with an English syndicate of which they were an integral part. In those days, before the development of an adequate quartermaster corps or service of supply, commercial purveyors were vital to the success of any military undertaking. Army supply was a form of enterprise in which many Jews, particularly in Europe, achieved wealth and influence.

The Frankeses were also "concerned" in the tea trade; they sent lumber to the West Indies, provided bread in large quantities for the troops, dealt in bills of exchange, and outfitted privateers to prey on the commerce of Spain and France. The War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) had been going on for several years; its American counterpart was the War of Jenkin's Ear (1739), which gradually merged into King George's War (1743-1748) in the colonies. It was during these wars that privateering became "big business," and the Frankeses were active in placing large orders for ships' guns.

In a letter which Jacob sent to Naphtali in London in 1743, the father confided that he would have sent Ratcha, a sister, to England were it not for the state of war that then existed. It is a commentary on the loose spelling of that generation to note the variations of her name. She was known also as Richa, Rachel, Richea, Richi, and Ritchie! And her Hebrew name might well have been Rebecca! The father wanted, no doubt, to get her away from the Gentile environment in New York town. At least, until she had made a good Jewish marriage. Actually she was not to make the trip to England until after her father's death in 1769, when she sailed in style on the "Duchess of Gordon." The newspapers of the day listed her among the English nobility and other notables who made the trip. Since she was a member of a family of wealthy American and English merchants, her social position was assured, even though she was a Jewess. The Frankses were welcome visitors at the Governor's mansion on any afternoon or evening and not merely on "visiting day."

Jacob Franks had no worries about Naphtali's marriage; he was already safe in the fold, for he had recently taken as his wife Phila, the daughter of his late Uncle Isaac Franks. The Franks family was chock-full of Philas, for the original Franks who had migrated to London—in the late seventeenth century—was married to a Phila, and as a consequence the pious descendants nearly all had a Phila in their midst. The name is obviously a homonymous Anglicization of a German Jewish variation of the old biblical Bilhah!

Jacob Franks also had a Phila among his children. In

1742, the young lady eloped with Oliver DeLancey, a Christian, of whom a rhymster sang:

This general in British garb is Oliver DeLancey.
They were a noted family and really very fancy.

The flight of their daughter and the disclosure that she had been secretly married for six months shocked Jacob Franks and his wife Abigail; they were observant, Orthodox Jews, and objected strenuously to intermarriage. For a while the parents refused to see the young bride even though they yearned for a sight of her. After about a year, each parent, without the knowledge of the other, began to make attempts at a reconciliation, fearing the other might object. Both of them confided their hopes in their letters to Naph-tali in London.

Jacob was ready to make peace with his son-in-law; he feared that if he persevered in his intransigence, Oliver might take it out on Phila, for the DeLanceys were one of the most powerful and wealthy families in all New York. James, an elder brother, was Chief Justice; in addition, they were allied through marriage with another influential family, the Van Cortlandts. Oliver DeLancey had called on his Jewish father-in-law to obtain a legacy due his wife Phila from one of her late uncles. Jacob Franks was ready to let him have it. What he faced if he fought this powerful clan is adequately documented by an incident that occurred six years later.

In 1749 Oliver DeLancey and some of his friends, having blackened their faces, smashed the windows, forced the doors, broke into the home of a Dutch Jewish emigrant in

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New York and "pulled and tore everything to pieces, and then swore they would lie with the woman, which put the man and woman in great fright. Oliver swore she was like Mrs. Clinton, and as he could not have her, he would have her likeness, and used very indecent language." The indignant husband appealed to several attorneys to initiate proceedings against Oliver, but no one would take a case against the brother of the man who was Chief Justice and the Lieutenant-Governor of the province.

Here is a letter which Abigail Franks wrote to her son, Naphtali, telling him how distraught she was because of Phila's marriage to DeLancey:

Flatt bush, June 7th, 1743.

Dear Heartsey:

My wishes for your felicity are as great as the joy I have to hear you are happily married. May the smiles of Providence waite allways on y'r inclinations and your dear [wife] Phila's whome I salute with tender affections, pray'g kind Heaven to be propitious to your wishes in makeing her a happy mother. I shall think the time teadious untill I shall have that happy information, for I don't expect to hear it by the return of these ships, and therefore must injoin your care in writting by the first oppertunity (after the birth or wathever it shall please God to bless you with) either by via Carrolina, Barbadoz, or any other.

I am now retired from town and would from my self (if it were possiable to have some peace of mind) from the severe affliction I am under on the conduct of that unhappy girle [your sister Phila]. Good God, wath a shock it was when they acquainted me she had left the house and had bin married six months. I can hardly hold my pen whilst I am a writting it. Itt's wath I never could have imagined, especially

after wath I heard her soe often say, that noe consideration in life should ever induce her to disoblige such good parents.

I had heard the report of her goeing to be married to Oliver Delancey, but as such reports had often bin off either of your sisters [Phila and Richa], I gave noe heed to it further than a generall caution of her conduct wich has allways bin unblemish'd, and is soe still in the eye of the Christians whoe allow she had disoblighd us but has in noe way bin dishonorable, being married to a man of worth and charector.

My spirits was for some time soe depresst that it was a pain to me to speak or see any one. I have over come it soe far as not to make my concern soe conspicuous but I shall never have that serenity nor peace within I have soe happily had hitherto. My house has bin my prison ever since. I had not heart enough to goe near the street door. Its a pain to me to think off goeing again to town and if your father's buisness would permit him to live out of it I never would goe near it again. I wish it was in my power to leave this part of the world; I would come away in the first man of war that went to London.

Oliver has sent many times to beg leave to see me, but I never would tho' now he sent word that he will come here [to Flatbush]. I dread seeing him and how to avoid I know noe way, neither if he comes can I use him rudly. I may make him some reproaches but I know my self soe well that I shall at last be civill, tho' I never will give him leave to come to my house in town, and as for his wife, I am determined I never will see nor lett none of the family goe near her.

He intends to write to you and my brother Isaac [Levy] to endeavour a reconciliation. I would have you answer his letter, if you don't hers, for I must be soe ingenious to confess nature is very strong and it would give me a great concern if she should live unhappy, tho' its a concern she does not meritt.

As to the other affair you wrote me abouth you may be very easy on that head, the person concern'd will give you all

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the satisfaction you desire. Wath you say about y'r sister's [Richa] comeing to England, I shall very readily agree to it, and the sooner the better, if it was only a means of her not seeing the other [Phila], wich she will hardly be able to avoid unless she intirely excludes her self from all company, wich she has don for this three months past, tho' Phila has not bin in town since she left us but has (wathever I have forbid) found means to send messages, for as they lived very affectionately it subsists still, and I am sure she will find all the means she can to see Richa.

I thank you and your dear Phila [your wife] in the behalf of your sisters and my self for the profussion of pres'ts sent us. I shall make mine up but can't tell when I shall wear it, for in the mind I am in now I have noe inclination for dress or vissiting. The girles will make theres up as soon as they goe to town wich will be the latter end of the summer. They was just in mourning for my Aunt Isaac [Levy] whoe had bin just dead when they received them.

The reason why I did not write to Mr. Aaron Franks [your] uncle was not from a due sence of obligations and gratitude but from an apprehensiveness of being troublesome. You may assure him I am senisable of the many kindnesses and favours rec'ed from him and it gives me pain to express my gratitude, because wathever I can say falls short of wath is his due from my family and my self, tho' if I can bring my mind into any state of ease I shall write him by this.

I wish I could find any thing agreeable to send to my dear Phila [your wife]. Moses [your brother] sends her a pott of sweet meets, and Mordochay Gomez's wife has given me a small pot for you wich I dare say is exceeding good, and I hope you may use it with pleasure. All friends say many kind things to you and wish you a great deall of joy. I shall take care and send some quails next faull and secure them better than the last.

Make my compliments to Uncle Abraham Franks with

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thanks for his kind letter wich I shall not answer by this and therefore desire you would make an excuse for me. Your brother David I hope will doe very well, the ship is not yet arrived at Phill[adelphia]. As to w[a]’th you say concerning my brother Nathan’s marrying, your reasons are perfectly just, but then on the other hand it is a great disadvantage for a man to keep house without a good mistress soe that a wife to him is a nessessary evill. My brother Mich’ll keeps his health and good charector wich is to me a great satisfaction.

Sol. Hart is absconded in very unhappy circumstance. His wife and child is with her brother wich is all they’ve got for the honor of being allyed to M. H[ar]t. It’s commonly said the rich man is God’s steward; M. H[ar]t is a very saveing one whoe will lett a brother perish when such a triffle as £200 might make him happy. The married sister wrote him [Sol. Hart] she had some tickets in the lottery and if she got a good prise she would send him a p’r. If the prayers of the poor prevaill, she may have success, if Sol. Hart puts up prayers for her, being he is realy poor and needy.

Now lett me say something for the distresst wee are more nearly concern’d in, and that is [your cousin] poor good Moses Solomon. Is that unhappy youth to spend the best part of his life, as it where, in a [Charlestown, S. C., debtor’s] goall, for such may be termed the confin’d life he is in att pr’st. We rec’d letters from him last week wherein he complains pittuously of the ill treatm’t he meets with from his friends whoe he hardly hears from, and when he does, never lett him know wath will be the consequence of his detention or wich way he may be cleared. It’s very severe that he must be the victim of another’s villiany. The manner in wich he committed his error was wath a person of greater penetration in buissness might have fell into. Hiss letting Mr. [Samuel] Levy come off was noe fault, because Mr. Levy’s pretence was to come here in order to make up his own affairs that he might the better be inabl’d to assist in dischargeing there joynt debts,

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wich I am afraid he has not much in his power to perform. Your father will give you a farther acc't of this mellancholy affair wich I wish may in some measure be happily terminated.

My compliments to Mrs. Compton and Capt. Riggs. I beg they will be soe good to forgive me that I don't answer there agreeable favour by this. My spirits is too depresst to write. It is with reluctancy I doe write to any one at pr'st, therefore whoever I omit you must excuse me to them.

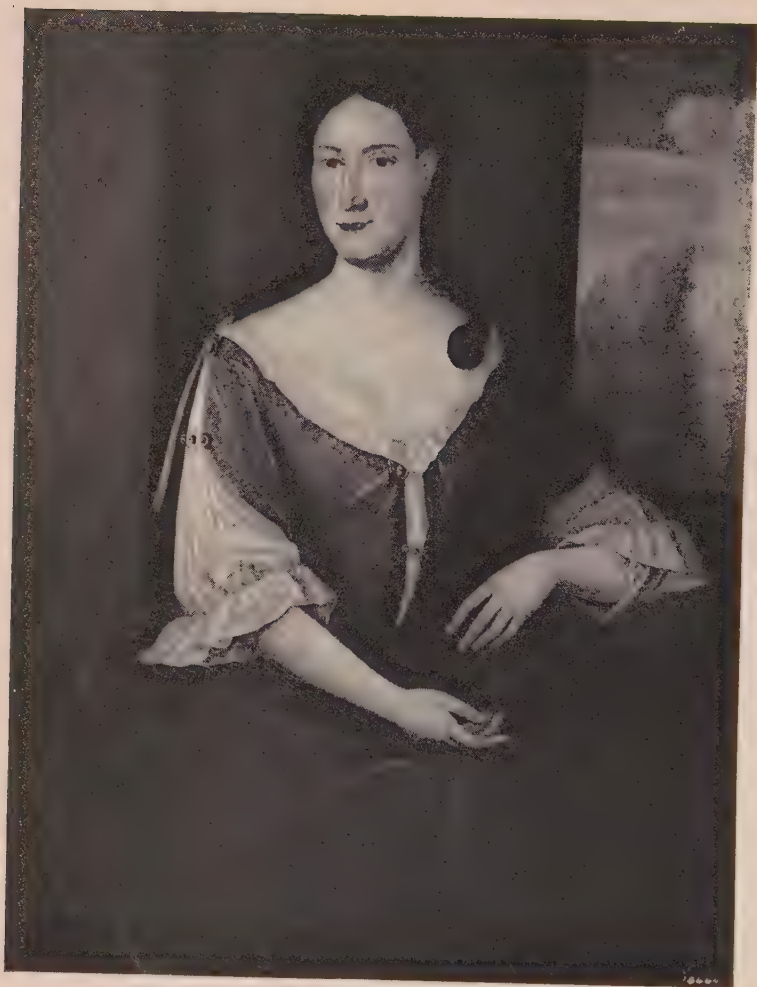
I think I've spun this to a considerable lenght and shall conclude with the repetition of my prayers for your health and happyness. I am, my dear son,

Your affectionate mother,
Abigaill Franks.

P. S. Nap'y Hart Myers goes on very well. He had noe view but the discharge of his duty when he offered his service to come over to be with that poor unhappy youth whoe I hartly wish may be reinstated to his health, both of body and mind.¹¹



JACOB FRANKS, COLONIAL MERCHANT-SHIPPER



ABIGAIL LEVY FRANKS, WIFE OF JACOB FRANKS

Chapter 4

New York, 1755-1784

THOUGH the Frankses were the most important of the Jewish army contractors in the colonies at this time, there were a number of others engaged in the same task of feeding and clothing the troops. Most of them, comparatively speaking small fry, limited themselves to local sectors.

Active in the northern New York-Lake Champlain area was Hayman or Hayyim Levy, an up-and-coming merchant. This young Jew, a Hannoverian, had probably found it easy, because of the English Hannover dynasty, to move from his native Germany to England and then on to the colonies.

Levy soon joined Shearith Israel and became an officer. He took a very active part in the religious life of the community almost to the year of his death. For a time he was chairman of the committee that collected money for the Jews in Palestine. In September, 1756, the thirty-five-year-old hustler was elected president or *parnas* of the congregation in New York. But at that very same meeting he was

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fined twenty shillings for "indecent and abusive language" used in the synagogue yard to the then *parnas*. He refused to serve as president and was fined again for declining the office. On another occasion—1765—he was mulcted for insulting *Hazzan* Pinto. Two years later he was on the receiving end of the insult, and a different Mr. Pinto—not the *hazzan* who, as we know, had gone off to London—had to pay forty shillings for the privilege of abusing the acting-president, no less a person than Hayman Levy himself.

During the French and Indian War he had a store on Bayard Street where he sold army goods. But this was only one of his business activities; he commissioned privateers—one had the formidable name of the "Dreadnaught"—and he became an important figure in the fur trade with a large following among the Indians. Many years later, so we are told, while still in the same business, he gave a job beating out peltries for a dollar a day to a young German immigrant by the name of John Jacob Astor.

To return to the French and Indian War period—why did Levy not accept the presidency of Shearith Israel then? There can hardly be any mystery as to why he declined the onerous duty of *parnas*. The job was vexing, took a great deal of time, and entailed many responsibilities. Moreover, Levy still had his fortune to make, and his business, general merchandise, required constant care. For a part of the war he had a partner, Solomon Marache. But Levy was engrossed in watching over various interests—one of which was to keep in touch with an agent at Fort Edward, north of Albany.

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Conditions in 1757 were not good for the English . . . nor for Mr. Levy. In the French and English colonies the continuing struggle for control of Canada and the eastern half of the Mississippi Valley had intensified into the French and Indian War. It was a battle for raw materials, for dominance in the fur trade, for the right to exploit the North Atlantic fishing grounds, and for the prospect of lucrative land speculation in the millions of acres that were yet to be settled. Indian raids provided the red dab of horror, and Catholic-Protestant animosity added more civilized hatred to the broad intercontinental canvas.

In that year, 1757, the French were in the ascendancy, building their *cordon sanitaire* against the English, boxing them up in the narrow coastal plain by a line of forts from eastern Canada westward and southward, down the Upper Ohio and the Mississippi to New Orleans and the Gulf. The English effort to dislodge them had thus far failed; the French had been victorious in western New York at Oswego, and now under Montcalm they were advancing south from the St. Lawrence to drive a wedge between New England and southern New York.

With Montcalm approaching Fort William Henry at the south end of Lake Champlain and the whole Hudson Valley threatened by his advance, a French victory seemed imminent. Thanks in greatest part to the indefatigable energy and patriotism of the Bordeaux Jewish purveyor, Abraham Gradis, Montcalm was now supplied with men, food, and powder to carry on the campaign. The French and Indians outnumbered the English and colonials almost five to one.

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Among the English the kitchens and the latrines, the slaughterhouses, and the miserable victims of smallpox were all jumbled together. Supplies were inadequate, and there were not sufficient wagons to maintain proper communication between Fort William Henry and Fort Edward, eighteen miles to the south. There were at least two Jewish traders in the forts: one, a man named Lyon, was at Fort William Henry; the other, Manuel Josephson, was at Fort Edward. Josephson was a young German destined in the next generation to become a highly respected citizen. At this time he was still unmarried and worked, no doubt, as a partner and agent for our Hayman Levy.

On the 10th of August, 1757, desperate refugees staggered into Fort Edward, carrying the news that General Montcalm had taken Fort William Henry the preceding day. Josephson wrote to Levy twice on the 10th; his second letter was excerpted and included in the English dispatches that carried the news of this defeat. These reports were sent on to England, but ultimately, generations later, they were returned to this country, to the Clements Library at Ann Arbor, where they now rest. Here is the extant excerpt of the letter which Josephson sent to Levy in New York:

Fort Edward, Aug't 10th, 1757.

Mr. Hayman Levy,
Sir:

I wrote you this morning; the post came in this morning but had no letters. Fort Wm. Henry went over to the French yesterday morning at seven o'clock with a very honourable capitulation, all their baggage, arms, colours, etc. The French

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Gen'l [Montcalm] made a present of a six pounder to Coll. Young in testimony of his gallant behaviour. They were to have been escorted by some of the French troops till they came safe here, but how much has that promise been violated!

When our troops came away this morning safe from the French, the cruel Indians (of which 'tis said they have near 3000) fell in the first place among them, took out the women from among them, stript, and afterward scalpt them with their children and sucklings. Almost every young lad and boy amongst them shared the same most cruel fate. There came upwards of eighty [sixty?] women out of the Fort whereof there's hardly ten come in. They then began upon the officers and soldiers, stript them of their cloaths, shoes, shirts, money, and swords, several officers scalped and other gent., among which is Capt. Collins and Mr. Furnace of the [supply] train. Mr. Williamson, engineer, is not yet come in; Farrell, the sutler of the Thirty-Five Regiment, and his wife, both killed and scalped. Lieut. Harburt is likewise missing. In short, you never saw such havock and condition the poor people come in camp. Lyon came in safe amongst the rest but much fatigued. . . .

Manuel Josephson.¹²

About two years after the capitulation of Fort William Henry, Manuel Josephson, then thirty years of age, married a member of the Judah family of New York City, where he was engaged in mercantile pursuits.

Among the guests whom Josephson entertained during the first year of his marriage was the sprightly but unstable New England poet, John Maylem. This native of Newport, who has been described as "a poet of small talent and a warrior of little distinction," very probably became acquainted with Josephson when both were engaged in quar-

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termaster work, before the "gallic perfidy" of Montcalm at Fort William Henry led Ensign Maylem into an Indian trap and captivity. It was probably the common experience of the tragic campaign that made the two men friends.

Now, in 1760, Maylem apparently had no home, and the Josephsons offered him shelter and encouragement in New York when, as he said, he was "reduced to the most contemptible state of indigence." On Maylem's part the attraction was not merely the kindness shown him by this generous young couple but the intellectual stimulus of association with Josephson, undoubtedly one of the best educated men in rabbinic lore in all the colonies. A favorite topic over which the two wrangled was "futurity" or the world to come: Josephson stoutly maintained his belief in this orthodox tenet, the poet—a Gentile—denied the validity of this concept. Weeks later, when Maylem sobered up after one of his customary drinking bouts, he was willing to admit that "the pleasures of a temporal life by the three weeks experience I have had can make of earth a heav'n."

One day in September, 1760, Maylem came home to the Josephson ménage hopelessly intoxicated. When he awoke the following morning and realized his shocking condition, he was so thoroughly ashamed of himself that he ran out of the house, walked most of the way to Philadelphia, and there, in a nearby wood, attempted to commit suicide. Tying an old shirt to a limb, he made a noose of one of the sleeves and then jumped, hoping to land in eternity. Fortunately the shirt tore and he found himself on the hard ground, sobered and reflective. Determined to turn over a

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new leaf, he made his way to Newport. He wrote to the Josephsons apologizing for his strange behavior. Pledging them to secrecy about his attempt at suicide, he asked his friends to forward to him the wig which they had given him as a gift.

Importance in the New York Jewish community was not limited to commercial eminence. There was a Mr. Abraham Is. Abrahams who was significant for a different reason: He was the most popular *mohel* or circumciser.

Abrahams travelled as far north as Rhode Island in the performance of his craft. It is doubtful that he was paid for performing this religious privilege. More likely he did so out of devotion. In June, 1756—he was then thirty-six—he began to chronicle his work as a *mohel* in New York City. His first recorded circumcision was that of his own son, Isaac. He was to grow up, not, as his father had prayed, “to the study of the Jewish law,” but to become a New York physician. He was the only Jewish graduate of King’s, later Columbia, College, prior to the American Revolution. Less than two months after Isaac Abrahams was circumcised, his father was called upon to make a trip to Newport, Rhode Island, at the invitation of a young businessman by the name of Aaron Lopez. His reply was as follows:

New York, Aug’t 8th, 1756.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,
S’r:

I was out of town last Monday or shou’d answer’d your favour pr. post. Am much oblig’d for your kind congratulation and wishes [on the birth of my son, Isaac].

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I take it as a great honour in your presenting me with the circumcising your son. Shou'd been glad it had been sooner on acc't of my prentice being out of his time and gone and will make it difficult for me to go just now. And another reason, my Cousin Manuel and self have enter'd in the business of distilling and tobacco manufactur. However, if I can possibly come in a little while hence will gladly do it, as nothing wou'd be more pleasure than to see my good friends att your place which I realy long to do. In my next will be more particular as to my coming. Till then I am, with respect, s'r,

Your very hum'le ser't,

Abr'm I. Abrahams.

My spouse joins her complim'ts to you, spouse, and family.¹³

In spite of the fact that the Jewish law requires that circumcision take place on the eighth day, the boy was still uncircumcised on the 25th of August:

New York, Aug't 25th, 1756.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,

S'r:

I am sorry to tell you that my bussiness will not admit of my being with you yet. Hope my brother will be here soon as have had an acc't of his arrival. However as it is very uncertain when I shall be able to come, having two trades to mind, and have hear'd that Doct'r Marks is releas'd out of goal [jail]. Believe he wou'd willingly go if you was to write him. Think he gladly go. Nothing wou'd give me more pleasure than to be with my friends, but as yet I can't. Pray make my excuse to them for not writing being in a great hurry of bussiness. My spouse joins her best respects to you, family, Mr. Moses Lopez, Mr. Rivera, and theirs, with, s'r,

Y'r very hum'le serv't,

Abr'm I. Abrahams.¹⁴

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September rolled along, and the little Lopez boy was still uncircumcised. Dr. Marks was still out of jail. Ultimately it was not Dr. Marks, but Abrahams himself, who went to Newport. He circumcised Joseph, the son of Aaron Lopez, on Sunday, February 12, 1757. The child, by this time, was in his seventh month; evidently there was no one capable of serving as a *mohel* in all Newport. The trip was worth while, even if it did take two days, for that same day, young Aaron, the son of Moses Lopez, was also circumcised. Moses, whose original name was José, had been the first of the Lopez brothers to come to the colonies. And as others of the Marrano relatives of Aaron reached the safety of these shores, Abrahams and his friends garbed them with gifts of phylacteries and praying shawls. It was a privilege to do something for a Jew plucked literally from the burning.

A little more than a decade later the New York merchant was invited again to come to Newport and to circumcise Abraham Lopez and his three sons, all of whom had just escaped from the Inquisition in Portugal:

Newport, Sep'r 6, 1767.

Mr. Ab'm Is. Abrahams,
Sir: (p. post)

I have the singular pleasure of addressing you on the joyfull occasion that presents me the arrival of a brother of mine from Portugal with his wife and three sons.

Their errand being founded on the grand object of glorifying the Protector of Israel, [they] are inspired with a spark of [Abraham,] our old father's zeal and ready to obey the divine precept.

Therefore earnestly entreat your devotion to lead you to be

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the meritorious instrument of their obtaining the covenant which happily characterize us a peculiar flock.

I would have joyed them before now in anticipating this request, but the poor estate of health my brother has been in made me think it prudent to wait his recovery.

Should it suit your conveniency to improve the first opportunity, after this reaches y'r hands, it will particularly oblige one that sincerely professes to be, sir,

Your most h'ble serv't,
[Aaron Lopez]¹⁵

Abrahams sailed to Newport late in October and performed the operations at Tiverton. The three sons ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-eight; their father, Abraham Lopez, was fifty-six years old.

Abraham Is. Abrahams was occasionally referred to in his own day as the "Rabby" or "Ribbi." As we saw in the case of Abraham DeLucena, this does not for a moment imply that Abrahams was the rabbi of the congregation as we understand the term. Although he did occasionally officiate as the religious leader, actually he was, at times, one of the Hebrew teachers instructing the young in the humble Jewish "Academy." (The school was built for the congregation through the kindness of the London Jew, Jacob Mendez da Costa.) The title "Rabby" accorded him is a variation of the Hebrew-Yiddish word meaning "teacher." Yiddish terms were common in this Sephardic or Spanish-rite congregation, for since the year 1700 at least half of the members were of Germanic or Ashkenazic origin.

The spiritual head of the congregation was still the cantor or *bazzan*. The congregation did not employ an ordained rabbi until the nineteenth century; a competent man

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did not want to "exile" himself to the colonies, and the community was too poor—or thought it was—to pay a salary that a real rabbi would have a right to expect.

A few months after Abrahams finally made his visit to Newport, Congregation Shearith Israel wrote to the Sephardic congregation in London asking for a young, unmarried man as *bazzan*. They wanted someone of sound moral character, who sang well and knew Hebrew, English, and Spanish. Of course it was understood that he had to be competent to officiate and to be able to instruct the children. To clarify their need, Shearith Israel wrote again the following year, 1758, telling their London friends just what provision they would make for their religious leader:

New York, March 13th, 1758, or
3d Veadar, 5518.

Mess'rs the *Parnassim* and *Gabay* of the K. Ks. of Sahar
Asamaim

["Gate of Heaven"] in London,
Gentleman:

Wee have receiv'd the favour of your letter of the 14th Hesvan [October 28, 1757] whereby wee are acquainted that no suteable person and worthy of your recommendation had yet presented to supply the place of our late *bazan*, but possible some proper one might offer in a little time. However, desiring our further instructions thereon, wee have no objection to a marr'ed man, but would choose one rather if with a small family and not attended with much charge, as our congregation is small, and few that are able to contribute to the support thereof.

The salary of fifty pounds sterling is exclusive of voluntary offerings, [and is also exclusive of] marriages and other things of that kind, also of [the fees of] those children whose par-

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ents are able to pay for thire schoolinge. Should a proper person present, wee shall defray the reasonable expense of thire sea store [food] and passage, which wee shall desire Mr. Moses Franks [formerly of New York] to supply.

As to settling a salary for a term of years or returning at our expence, on any little disquit [grievance] which he might take, it is not agreeable to the congregation, and wee presume might be attended with bad consequence, if the person so fixed should build thereon, and be the very meanes of producing some kiend of dislike which wee would willingly avoid. But wee think there will be no reason to doubt his continuance should he not misbehave, which wee hope will not happen, as wee are confident that your goodness would not recomend any but such as may appear proper and worthy thereof.

Wee shall esteem the favour of your answer soon as possible, that if wee can't soon have a proper person from London on these terms, wee may endeavor to provide for one some other way. Wee sincerely wish you all prosperity and happiness, and conclude with due respect, gentlemen,

Your most obliged hb. serv'ts,
The *parnassim* and elders in the
direction of the K.Ks. ["Holy
Congregation"] of Seherith Israel
in New York.

[Isaac Gomez,
Sampson Simson.] ¹⁶

The congregation finally secured the services of Joseph Jessurun Pinto in 1759. Although the *hazzan* was expected to be the Hebrew teacher for the Jewish community, and Pinto was well educated in Hebrew lore, they decided also to seek a special teacher for the children. The congregation had been conducting a Hebrew school for about a generation, and for the last few years it was giving additional in-

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struction in the three "R's" in English and Spanish. In the following letter, addressed to Benjamin Pereira of Jamaica, we discover what they expected of their schoolteacher and what they were prepared to offer him:

New York, Dec'r 16, 1760.

Mr. Benj. Pereira,
S'r:

After our compliments to you and your family wee take this opper'y to acquaint you that at a meeting of the elders of this K.K. it was agreed that wee should apply to you and that you will be good enough to engage a suitable master capable to teach our children the Hebrew language. English and Spanish he ought to know, but he will not suit us unless he understands Hebrew and English at least. This must require your particular care. A single, modest, sober person will be most agreeable. However, on your good judgment wee shall depend as you very well know our minds and tempers and can make choice of such as will be suitable and capable of the undertaken.

He must oblige himself to keep a publick school at the usual hours of the forenoons on every customary day at our *jesiba* ["school"]. Children whos parents are in needy circumstances he must teach gratis. His salary shall be first at forty pounds, New York money, p[er]. year, and shall commence from the day of his arrival here, and all other children he teaches must and will pay him as has been done heretofore. Wee flatter ourselves you will excuse the trouble wee give you as it will very much oblige our whole congregation and in a more particular manner the *parnasim* who are, s'r,

Your most ob't humble [serv'ts,
Daniel Gomez,
Samuel Hart.]¹⁷

The New York Jewish congregation was evidently not very happy in its relation with its cantor, Joseph Jessurun

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Pinto. Within a few months after his arrival, in the summer of 1759, he wrote an abject letter of apology promising to mend his conduct. He was then only thirty years of age, unmarried, and evidently had done something to displease the stern trustees.

There was certainly no objection to him on the score of his learning. He could write a good Hebrew letter—no mean accomplishment—and in 1760, after the fall of Montreal in the French and Indian War, he composed a Hebrew prayer that was translated into English “by a Friend to Truth” and published on the occasion of the celebration which took place at the “Jews Synagogue,” October 23. This was probably the first work of an unconverted Jew printed in the North American colonies. Three years later, when a Day of Thanksgiving was appointed to celebrate the expulsion of the French forces from Canada, he preached exultantly on the tenth verse of the second chapter of the prophet Zechariah: “Ho, ho, flee then from the land of the north, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heavens, saith the Lord.” Two years later Pinto offered his resignation to take effect in May, 1766, and asked the congregation to send him and his family—he was now married and had two children—back to London. His plea was that he wanted to settle an estate . . . and that he could not live on his present salary. Possibly he and the congregation had had enough of each other:

To the most worthy and respected *parnasim*, assistants, and *jehidim* [“members”], and the holl congregation of *Shearith Israel*, whom God preserve:

The humble petition of Joseph Jessurun Pinto, at present *hazan* of this *kehillah* ["congregation"], sets forth that being obliged to remove with his family from this place to Europe, on account of the unavoidable necessity of attending him selfs to the recovering a small estate belonging to him and which at present he is apprehensive is in bad hands, and, without his own immediate application in a proper manner, may never come in to his hands,

And having a wife and two children to maintain, which he finds requires more expence than he is at present able to support, having for near seven years past done his utmost to discharge the functions of his office to the satisfaction of all the congregation,

He therefore begs your kind and benevolent assistance to enable him to pay his and his family's passage to Europe, and extend to him the same humane bounty as has been bestowed on others, that tho' strangers, and consequently never contributed to the service of the congregation, yet your humane hearts compassionated their care, and they have been relieved from their necessities and helpt to remove from hence to some other place.

Your petitioner begs leave in the most solemn manner to assure you that his moving from this place with his family is not in any schape whatsoever owing to any fault he can possibly find, or has ever found duiring his residence in this city as *hazan* of this congregation, but only to the imediate and unavoidable necessity he lays under of procuring, by all such means as the Almighty may put in his power, the recovery of his own right from those who by falce pertences endeavour to keep him from it, which [h]is duty to him selfs, to his wife and children obliges him to do, and which he is apprehensive will never be accomplished with[out] his and his family's personall application on the spott where the same must be legally litigated.

This is the only instinc that forces him to leave this con-

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gregation and to be thus troublesome to you, in earnestly requesting you to enable him to pay the passage and other charges common in such cases, hoping that soon God will be pleased to put in [h]is power to return the same.

With his thankfull acknowledgement for this and all other favours received at your hands during his residence amongst you, as your *hazan* and servant of the congregation, and praying the Lord of the Universe to bless and prosper you all and your familys, and to enable you at all times to be the support and protectors of the necessitous, *Vasalom* ["peace"], Amen, and so "*The Lord God of your fathers increase you a thousand fold and bless you as he has spoken to you*" [Deut. 1:11], and so may be the will of the Lord, *Amen*.

So prays your petitioner (as in duty bound,
gent'n, your very most humill and most
obedient and duttifull servant,

H[azza]'n Jos. Jessurun Pinto.

Sunday, *the first day of the week*, the fast day of Thebeth, *the tenth of the month of Thebeth*, in the year 5526 *since the creation*, the 22d of Dezember, anno 1765.¹⁸

The congregation was generous and paid all his expenses back home, and he sailed in the summer of 1766. Now a citizen, he had just rounded out the requisite seven years' residence in the colony and had been naturalized. Maybe this was what he wanted out of the colonies; he could never have been naturalized in England proper.

For a year while Pinto was *hazzan* at Shearith Israel, one of the minor honorary officers was the merchant Solomon Marache. Until 1761 he had been a partner of Hayman Levy, operating with him under the firm name of Levy and Marache. One of their customers was the Aaron Lopez

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whom we have already met. This Rhode Island merchant consigned candles, indigo, sugar, and soap to New York, and in exchange received tea, luxury goods, and other manufactures from his New York agents. At this particular time—June, 1760—Lopez wanted India goods and silks. The indigo he proposed sending came from South Carolina, the sugar from the West Indies, and the soap and the candles from New England, probably from Newport itself. It is interesting to note that the following year a method of making Castile soap was to be introduced into Rhode Island by a Portuguese Jew, James Lucena. Issachar Pollock, a former New York merchant, then settled in Newport, accompanied the goods which Lopez sent to Levy and Marache.

In the following letter from Levy and Marache an allusion to the whaling industry may be noted:

New York, 9 June, 1760.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,
D'r S'r:

We are favour'd with yours of 4 June p[er]. Mr. Issacker Pollack [of Newport], inclosing invoice and bill [of] lading for 20 boxes spermacety candles on board "Drummond" for your acco't to our address, which shall have our best care in disposing thereof to your best advantage.

We observe Mr. Pollack had disposed off the pewter, which finishes that article. Indigo will not answer here except you can purchase the best quality at 7/[shilling] curr[enc]'y, when you may buy as much that may suit you for our acco't.

In regard to sugars, if you can meet with a parcell, you may go as far as 7/4 this curr[enc]'y for the first quality, and the second [quality] and third, in propotion.

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Should you meet with any commodity that you think will answer this way, you may then be a purchaser on our acco't, and should you incline to be concern'd [a partner], we leave to you in acting as you think best.

We should be glad of another parcell spermacety candles soon. We fear it will not be in our power of procuring any more tea for you on the same terms. However, you may depend on our endeavours for your interest.

We sincerely congratulate you on your good success both in the whaling and other concerns, which will please the underwriters.

The memorandum you inclosed for sundry goods you may depend shall be comply'd with in the best and most expeditious manner. All the vessels from Europe are not yet in. By the last advices from there, no India goods to be had, as the sales was not to commence till the middle of April. We can't have any silks etc., till the next vessels. As soon any comes to hand, your order in that shall be compleated. We shall put up what we have ready now, and the remainder shall be forwarded you as soon the other vessels comes in. However we have the greatest part in our store.

We return you our thanks for the confidence you put in us and hope we may be found deserving. We are sorry to find you have had such a long and fatiguing passage, but we are certain the pleasure of meeting your good family and friends overballances all the fatigue.

Mrs. Levy joins us in our best respects to yourself, Mrs. Lopez, and rest of the family, and believe us to be with true esteem, d'r s'r,

Your friends and most obd. serv'ts,
Levy and Marache.

P. S. Mr. Levy informs you that he has sold all your soap, agreeable to the weight marked on the boxes (if no fault is found), at 7d. p[er pound]. which is carried to the credit of

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y'r acco't with him, and if you can send us another parcell of ab[ou]'t 50 boxes, believe could put them off.

L & M.¹⁹

Another client of Aaron Lopez was a Long Island merchant by the name of Aaron Isaacs. The whole island was familiar country to New York colonial Jewry, for when New York was still New Amsterdam, Jews did business there, and later individual families found it a pleasant place for commerce and for homes. In the 1760's, there were Jewish settlers in South Haven, East Hampton, and Jamaica.

It is questionable how much a certain Moses family in Jamaica enjoyed the balmy weather at their end of the island, for Mr. Moses was living in the Jamaica jail. But judging from the fact that he became the proud papa of two sons while incarcerated, it is reasonable to assume that he was imprisoned for debt alone, and that his confinement was not too onerous.

Another settler at Jamaica was Isaac Isaacs, probably not related to Aaron Isaacs who lived at East Hampton, at the opposite end of the island. Aaron had come from New York, at least he had been a contributor to the synagogue in 1748, but whether he was a native of New York, or an immigrant, is difficult to determine. If we are to judge solely from the phonetic spelling of his letters he was surely no native, but bad spelling even among the natives at this time was the rule rather than the exception. His letters may well reflect the bucolic brogue of East Hampton.

About the year 1750 Aaron, then a young man of about twenty-six, had married Mary Hedges, a Christian girl of a well-known East Hampton family, and settled down in

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that village. There is every reason to assume that he became a successful merchant, for the records show him busily buying, selling, and bartering wheat, silverware, merchandise, farms, and houses. He had property in Montauk and East Hampton, owned part of a wharf at Sag Harbor, and was one of the founders of Clinton Academy.

Evidently, when he married the nineteen-year-old Mary, he decided to throw in his lot with his wife's people. His very first child, born within a year of the marriage, was baptized, and the succeeding ten children were similarly ushered into the Christian faith. There was no call by him for the services of Mr. Abrahams.

Probably like many others who have lived isolated in the villages and hamlets of America, far from a Jewish community, he found it natural and expedient to drift with the current, worshipping with his neighbors, marrying and giving in marriage. About fifteen years after his marriage in East Hampton he became a convert to Christianity. This is typical "assimilation," which began almost with the first settlement of Jews on American soil. We shall encounter it frequently.

One of Aaron's daughters was Sarah—reared, of course, as a Christian—who married a Mr. William Payne sometime during the Revolutionary War. In 1791 they had a son whom they named John Howard Payne. Many years later, in Paris, this grandson of Aaron Isaacs wrote an opera called *Clari* which included the song, "Home, Sweet Home."

But back in the 1760's his grandfather Isaacs was carrying on a brisk trade with Aaron Lopez at Newport, ship-

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ping him primarily meat. Here are two letters which reflect the business relations of these two men:

Easthampton, July 23, 1764.

Mr. Luppess,
S'r:

Wen I was at Newport we have had some talck abuth one hundred barrells of beff, and if you are willing to give eigh dalers a barrell you shall have the beff, acarding to ouer agiriment, abuth the 20 day of Navember naxt, and I woold have you to write to me abuth it by the first apertunity, that you and I me [may] depend of ech other.

From your frind and humb'e sarv't,

Aaron Isaacs.

P. S. The beff wigth, acarding to the York low [law], 220 lb. p'r b[arrel]. The pay to be half dowin in cash or bills; the other halfe to be the first of May nax, 1765.

Mr. Joseph Jacobs of Southampton is consunred [concerned] in the beff with me. I shall sand [send] the oars down the first apertunt^y.²⁰

East Hamptun, July 23, 1767.

Sir:

I have been informed your vessel is arived from Lisban. If you will take 2/6 Yark money p'r bushel for solt, you may send me by the bearour 200 bushels, but you must know Yark custom: 125 for a 100, and I will peay you in hard mony or beef at the marcket price. Tharefore your ancer will much a blige your frind and humble sarvent,

Aaron Isaacs.

P. S. I desire to know whether Elnathan Eldredge of Dartmith hath sent to you for me £78 lawful mony which he ows me.²¹

During the Revolution, Aaron Isaacs was one of a small number of Long Island Whigs who refused to live under

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the English flag. Though a man of substance, he left his lands and goods behind him and fled the British-occupied island for the free air of neighboring Connecticut. And once there he managed to make himself useful to the patriots by aiding in the exchange of prisoners with the British. It was 1782 before he finally left his place of refuge, Haddam on the Connecticut River. He loaded up a vessel under the watchful eye of the state customs officers and sailed back across the Sound, carrying with him his clothing and furniture, shoats and sheep, lumber and leather, and the inevitable barrel of rum and a barrel of pork. No doubt during his stay he also ran into some of his fellow-Jews from New York who also had refused to remain in their homes during the English occupation, and who had fled for safety across the border to Stratford and Norwalk. Even though he owned shoats and ate pork, we may certainly refer to his former coreligionists as fellow-Jews, for his Christian neighbors buried this convert under the epitaph: "An Israelite in whom there was no guile."

After the war ended and the enemy evacuated New York, the patriots began to drift back, in the winter of 1783, and to rebuild their religious community under the leadership of the synagogue president, Hayman Levy. To accomplish this it was important that their former *hazzan*, then in Philadelphia, return to his old charge. This "rabbi" was Gershom Mendes Seixas, the first Jewish native American minister. In 1768, when only twenty-two years of age, he had been elected the spiritual leader, not simply because he was competent, but because there were no other candi-

dates for the post. The congregation soon found out that they had made a wise choice. Aside from the fact that he was related to many members of Shearith Israel, he was a charming gentleman, intelligent, with a nice sense of humor, and typically "American." His roots were in this soil. He was no scholar, his Hebraic learning was modest in its proportions, but it speaks well for the Jewish schools of the time, or for its teachers, that he did acquire sufficient knowledge of rabbinic lore to serve as the spiritual head of a Jewish congregation.

Eighty pounds a year, perquisites, firewood, and a modest home were given to this handsome bachelor when he initially accepted the rabbinical office which he was to fill with distinction for the next forty-eight years. He was anything but rich, and even had to resign in 1775 in order to induce his congregation to raise his salary. It was not that they were dissatisfied with him, but the congregation was not wealthy; they carried a heavy load of old age pensions and charity disbursements . . . and, apparently, they were determined to maintain the good old ecclesiastical tradition that clergymen must be not only humble but poor. And after all, he was still a bachelor.

When the war reached New York City the following year and the English took possession, the rabbi and the patriots in the congregation left with the Scrolls of the Law for nearby Connecticut, where they lived for several years. Gradually they began to drift to Philadelphia, and in 1779 there were so many New York *émigrés* there that they called upon Seixas to join them and to remain with them until the war was over. The New Yorkers helped bring

new life to the synagogue Mikveh Israel. The *hazzan* organized their services along more modern lines, helped them dedicate their new building, and joined with them in their struggle for civil liberties. His friends, in turn, saw to it that he received a living wage.

This was the situation in December, 1783, when Hayman Levy was ordered by the congregation to see if Seixas would return to New York. Seixas was reluctant to do so. Before he finally made up his mind a number of letters passed back and forth, particularly between him and Levy. Here is the letter in which he specified the conditions under which he was ready to reassume the post at Shearith Israel:

D'r and Worthy Sir:

The many manifestations of your friendship to me since I have been in the office of *hazzan* (both here and in New York) leaves no room to doubt of the sincerity of your professions, but as the *Kaal Sheerit Israel* is now situated must confess myself incapable to form a judgement whether or not it will be in my power to render that degree of general satisfaction which is absolutely requisite for any person who serves in that vocation.

In the first place I am unacquainted with the Spanish and Portugueze languages which have ever been used since the first establishment of the synagogue. Secondly, I am informed that many parties are form'd (and forming) to create divisions among the reputable members of the congregation, by which means a general disunion seems to prevail instead of being united to serve the Deity, consonant to our holy law. And, thirdly, as I have now a family to provide for, I can not think of giving up this place till I meet with some encouragement from you that my salary will be made equivalent

to what I receive here, for unless I can obtain a sufficiency to support my family in a decent manner by being *hazan*, I must inevitably give up the calling and endeavour, with the blessing of God, to procure it by industry and an application to business.

These, sir, are the reasons why I have not been so explicit in "declaring my intention of serving the K. K. Sheerit Israel any longer" as you intimated in your letter I ought to have been.

Now, these circumstances premised—if it will be agreeable to the *Kaal* to have the same mode of carrying on public worship as *we* unanimously agreed to and established in this city, if some regular form of government be adopted so as to have a proper subordination in the society, and [if] the finance of the *tsedaka* [treasury] can afford to allow me a comfortable maintenance—I am very willing to return to my native city, in the spring, say by *Ros Hodes Nisan* [New Moon, March 23, 1784], and accept of my former station. If not, I must content myself to remain here till something more advantageous may offer.

You will please to observe that I answer (and write to) you as an individual and one to whom I entrust the management of the matter, in full confidence of your integrity and disinterestedness.

Your haveing accepted of the presidency of the synagogue gives me real satisfaction as it coincides with my opinion of its being your due, and knowing you to be a person capable of commanding a proper respect to the office of *parnass*, and by your example inviting others to behave with decency and decorum in time of public service.

May you long enjoy the pleasing self-satisfaction resulting from a consciousness of haveing done your duty. I can not conclude better than by repeating what our divine master and legislator [Moses] told his immediate successor [Joshua], "Be

strong and of good courage; be not afraid or dismayed." Do that what you know to be right, that the Lord may be with thee in all thy ways.

Please to present my salutations to every branch of your family, in which my wife unites, and believe me to be, dear and worth[y] sir,

Your affec'te humble serv't,
Gershom Seixas.

Philadelphia, 21st Dec'r, 1783.²²

By the last week in January £200 was agreed upon as salary by the New York officers, and in the following month Seixas gave notice to the Philadelphia congregation that he was returning to his original post in the next four or five weeks. This news was distasteful to the Philadelphians, who at once wrote to the New Yorkers, protesting against the departure of the "rabbi" on such short notice. At the same time they urged Seixas to remain, at least till after the Passover now only a few weeks off. Despite the fact that Seixas joined the officers of Mikveh Israel in their plea and pointed out the bad condition of the roads in winter, Hayman Levy was adamant: the *hazzan* had to come back. The New York president politely wrote Mikveh Israel that inasmuch as the whole question concerned itself with a mere week or so, they might as well release Seixas sooner than later. Having thus refused their request to retain the minister until Passover, he wished them the enjoyment of many happy festivals; the old Indian trader was nothing if not a gentleman! By the first day of April, Seixas was back at the Mill Street Synagogue in New York.

Several months before this, at the first official meeting of the New York congregation after the Revolution, it was decided that an "address" should be presented to the governor of the state. A committee for this purpose was appointed. Its three members were Levy, who was the acting-president of the congregation, Isaac Moses, and Myer Myers. Myers was a merchant, and he was active and prominent in Masonic circles. His chief claim to fame, however, rests on the fact that, in addition to his other activities, he was one of the most distinguished silversmiths of colonial New York. His colleagues in the trade must have recognized his craftsmanship, for just about this time they elected him chairman of the Gold and Silver Smiths Society of New York. He was quite catholic in his professional work: he made silver bells for the synagogue as well as collection plates for Presbyterian churches.

Isaac Moses, the nephew and son-in-law of Hayman Levy, was a true Whig and, like Myers, a Mason. During a crucial period of the Revolution, when the country was sorely in need of credit, he offered to give his personal bond for £3,000 in order to provide supplies for the army. On more than one occasion this resourceful merchant willingly turned over to the government goods which were otherwise almost impossible to secure. In 1775, when the army set out to conquer Canada, hard coin—not paper—was indispensable. Moses and his partners made a notable sacrifice; they raised \$20,000 in specie and accepted Continental paper in exchange. For this act of patriotic devotion they received the thanks of President John Hancock. This New York merchant was actively engaged in privateering

and was associated in enterprises of this type with Robert Morris, the financier of the American struggle for independence.

This is the letter which the committee presented to the governor of the state of New York:

[New York, January, 1784.]

To His Excellency, George Clinton, Esquire, Governor, Captain General, and Commander in Chief of the Militia of the State of New York, and Admiral of the Navy of the Same: May it please your Excellency:

We, the members of the antient congregation of Israelites, lately returned from exile, beg leave to welcome your arrival in this city with our most cordial congratulations.

Though the society we belong to is but small when compared with other religious societies, yet we flatter ourselves that none has manifested a more zealous attachment to the sacred cause of America in the late war with Great Britain.

We derive, therefore, the highest satisfaction from reflecting that it pleased the Almighty Arbiter of Events to dispose us to take part with the country we lived in; and we now look forward with pleasure to the happy days we expect to enjoy under a constitution wisely framed to preserve the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty.

Taught by our Divine Legislator to obey our rulers, and prompted thereto by the dictates of our own reason, it will be the anxious endeavour of the members of our congregation to render themselves worthy of these blessings by discharging the duties of good citizens, and, as an inviolable regard to justice and the constitution has ever distinguished your administration, they rest confident of receiving an equal share of your patronage.

May the Supreme Governor of the Universe take you under His holy protection, and may you long continue to exer-

cise the dignified office, you now possess, with honor to yourself and advantage to your constituents.

We have the honor to be, with the greatest respect, in behalf of the antient congregation of Israelites,

Your Excellencys very obedient humble servants,

[Hayman Levy, Myer Myers, Isaac Moses.]²³

Chapter 5

New England, 1649-1759

AMONG the signatures of the letter, cited above, to Governor George Clinton was that of Isaac Moses of New York. Although the name was a common one, this Isaac Moses might well have been the same man who was "warned out" of Boston in 1762, some twenty years earlier. The Bostonians and other New Englanders considered the right of residence a privilege, and strangers were ordered out of town unless they could furnish bond that they would not become dependents. Limiting the right of residence to privileged individuals was no strange custom, nor peculiar to the settlers of New England. The zealous vigilance over the right of domicile was usual at this time in many communities of Europe and was common practice in Central European Jewish ghettos.

Apparently Isaac Moses bore the Bostonians no grudge: in 1775, when the Boston port was still closed by the British, some Virginians from Essex County consigned about 1,100 bushels of grain to John Hancock and Samuel Adams

to feed the hungry and fractious rebels. But driven by contrary winds, the ship had to run for shelter to Dutch St. Eustatia in the West Indies, where a Jew, Isaac Van Dam, sympathetic to the Americans, generously sold the cargo free of all expense. A Samson Mears, then on the Island, received the money and forwarded it in the form of a bill of exchange drawn on Isaac Moses, and the latter, then a successful New York merchant, honored the draft.

Although it is fairly certain that Isaac Moses was "warned out" of Boston in the 1760's because he was a stranger without money, and not because he was a Jew, it is nevertheless a matter of record that the New Englanders, with rare exception, had no use for Jews.

The original Puritans were interested in Hebrew and in ancient Hebrews . . . but not in their descendants as long as they remained Jews. As children of the Renaissance and the Reformation, the New England Puritans felt it important to be able to read and understand the Hebrew Bible in the original. The Bay Psalm Book which they published in 1640 was an original translation from the Hebrew. It was the first book printed in the English colonies and it contained Hebrew type.

The Puritans compared their struggles and their wanderings to those of the Hebrews in the Sinaitic desert. They too had fled from oppression to a wilderness so that they might worship God as they saw fit, but they expected all who lived with them in this American Canaan to worship God in their fashion. Culturally and ethnically they were a homogeneous group who frowned at the thought of tolerating or assimilating others. Naturalization in the

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first half of the seventeenth century was limited to church members. Refugee dissenters themselves, they perfected a union of Church and State, a union in which there was no place for other dissenters . . . or Jews.

Let this not be understood to mean that no Jew ever came in those days to live or to try to live there. There were always individual Jews in the various colonies of New England, and particularly in Boston, one of the great ports of the country. From 1649 on there recur the names of Jews who wandered into that town. One of them—Solomon by name—was prosecuted in 1668 for travelling through some Massachusetts village on a Sunday. As John Maylem sang of the Boston Sabbath:

Henceforth let none, in peril of their lives,
Attempt a journey; or embrace their wives.

This, then, was no anti-Jewish prejudice. Washington himself was later stopped in Connecticut for travelling on the Lord's Day, but was excused when he informed the tithing-man that he was on his way to church.

In 1675, Rowland Gideon, a member of a British Jewish family that was to include a future, and by that time Christian, Chancellor of the Exchequer among its descendants, was involved in a case before a Boston court. Not only did he remind these lovers of Scripture that he was a member of the "scatered nation," but he asked them to recall "that the same law should be for the stranger and sojourners as for the Israelite." Here was an Israelite with maybe just a gleam of guile: he could cite Scripture as deftly as a Puritan.

New England, 1649-1759

Among the better-known merchants in the late seventeenth century were the Spanish-Portuguese Frazon or Frazier clan. It is probable that the family name was originally Freras. There were three of them—more than likely all brothers. Already in the 1600's they might well have boasted that they were third-generation "Americans," for their father and grandfather had lived in Brazil under the Dutch.

They had received a good Jewish training, very good indeed, as Cotton Mather was to discover. The eminent divine was bent on converting one of the three. To this end he brought forth certain theological documents which his Jewish auditor at once pronounced false. Mather, at this confrontation, confessed the forgery, and from that time on Mr. Frazon lost all faith in the integrity of the zealous missionary.

The Frazons had a large warehouse in Charlestown, owned their own ships, and carried on an active trade with the West Indies. There they shipped almost anything from a piece of iron to a biscuit. One of the brothers, Joseph, died in 1704 and was carried over land and water, by coach and boat, to Newport for burial.

The following year business took Samuel, another brother, to the West Indies. He was of tough fibre, probably in more ways than one, for he was once haled into a Boston court for beating a colored servant . . . not his own. On this particular voyage Samuel was reported to have gone down with his ship and crew in a Caribbean storm. Actually, driven out to sea by the raging elements, Samuel and his men rode out the rigors of the hurricane for six

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days without food or supplies. They were finally cast ashore on the isle of Saint Vincent, where they were captured by Indians. Two of his men died, but Frazon and a Negro slave survived the captivity which lasted for three months. Samuel was then brought to Martinique and ransomed for seventeen or eighteen pistoles. Ultimately he made his way to Barbados, where his escape and rescue were reported in the Boston newspapers in March of 1706.

Near the end of the second decade of this century a Jew, Isaac Lopez, of London, was elected constable in Boston. This was more an onerous than an honorific office and was not predicated on the grant of citizenship. He refused to serve, and in consequence was compelled to pay the usual fine. Also living in Boston about this time was Judah Monis, a merchant. He was an Italian or North African Jew, probably of Spanish or Portuguese descent, who had wandered across the ocean to Jamaica and had found his way north to New York. There, by 1716, he had already been admitted as a freeman. The money he had paid for this privilege, together with other moneys that had been accumulating, was applied by the magistrates of the city to the purchase of wine and for a bonfire to commemorate the anniversary of George I's accession to the throne. Monis had composed an instruction book for the Hebrew language. In the summer of 1720, then in Boston, he sent it with the following letter to the Corporation of Harvard College:

Most Rever[en]'d Gentlemen:

Having made an essay to facelitate the instruction of youth in the Hebrew language, w[hi]'ch probably may be pub-

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lishe[d] if there may be a prospect of its been serviceable, I make bold to present it to your judicious perusall. I am sensible not to be such a master of the English tongue as to avoide improprieties in some expressions, in w'ch I must crave your excuse as also your candour in the other part of my composition.

Being aproved by such worthies and learned gentlemen as your selves, as some of the best and learned gentlemen of the dissenters and of different churches have done, it will be greatfull to me, and I do purpose to draw it over again (if God be pleased) with quotations, and in Chaldean [square Hebrew] character, and interim, I remaine, gentlemen,

Your m[os]'t humble serv't to command,
Judah Monis.²⁴

Boston, June the 29th, 1720.

That same year, Harvard College, encouraged by a group of Christian ministers who were interested in Monis, conferred the degree of Master of Arts on him for this Hebrew grammar. Monis was thus the first Jew in America to receive a degree from any college. Two years later, on March 27, 1722, he became a convert to Christianity as his sponsors had hoped, and in the following month was appointed instructor in Hebrew. He held the position until his retirement in 1760 at the age of seventy-seven.

It is difficult to determine what motivated his conversion: sincere interest in Christianity, or the need of a job, or possibly the desire to marry Abigail Marret, whom he may already have known at this time. The Reverend Mr. Colman, who presided at the baptism, referred in the usual formula to him as "an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile," yet warned him, saying: "Be sure that you have *no*

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by-ends, no sinister and corrupt *views*, no *worldly* advantages, in what you do this day. God forbid, that *these* should act you." Bishop Kennett of London, when apprised by Colman of the conversion of Monis, answered rather skeptically: "The case of Mr. Monis will be a credit to our religion if he continue firm in our faith and exemplary in his Christian life, but truly I am so doubtfull of the sincerity of converts . . . that I shall not be much surprized if we are at last deceived in him." The Bishop's suspicions were not justified. Indeed, there is no real reason to doubt the sincerity of Monis, for although he continued to observe Saturday as the Sabbath, in every other respect he conducted himself as a pious and observant Christian.

The salary offered Monis was inadequate, particularly since he wanted to get married. Accordingly, in the month following his appointment, he wrote once more to the authorities of the College:

Cambridge, May 22th, A. D., 1722.

To the Rev[eren]’d President and the Other Rev’ds, Members of the Corporation of Harvard College,
Rever’nd Gentlemen:

I have been inform’d of the honour you have put upon me in chusing me to be a teacher of the Hebrew language in your College. The respect you have shown to me in this choice I heartily and thankfully acknowledge, and I hope you will interpret these lines as testimonies of my gratitude. Tho’ I believe I could betake myselfe to such secular business as by the ordinary blessing of Providence would promote my worldly interest and estate more than w[ha]’t I can expect by instructing youth in the Hebrew, yet I finde my selfe steadily inclined and willing to spend my time (if Providence favour

the design) in giving the best instruction I can in the afore-said language to all such of the College as shall be desirous to learn of me.

I think the more acquainted the ministers of the gospel are wth the Hebrew tongue, and so wth the Old Testament, the better able they will be to understand the New Testament and so to preach our glorious *Lord Jesus Christ* who was spoken of by all the Old Testament prophets.

But however necessary I may apprehend the knowledge of the Hebrew language to be, and however willing and disposed I may be to teach it, yet rev^d gentlemen, I hope you will give me leave to say that the salary you have voted as an encouragement or reward for my labour is not sufficient to support me. It is not sufficient to support me in my single state, much less if I should enter into a married state (w^{ch} I have some hope of doing). If I should speedily enter on the service you have chosen me to, [the] necessary furniture for a chamber in College can't cost me much less than thirty-five pounds. But if I had such furniture by me already (w^{ch} certainly I have not), yet the salary you have voted would not suffice to support me thro' the year.

I hope, gentlemen, you will candidly interpret this representation of my case, and if you continue to desire my being an instructor in the Hebrew in your College, I hope you will please to think of some methods wherby a proper support and maintainance may be afforded to me, and I shall count my selfe greatly oblig'd if you will let me know your minds in this matter as soon as you conveniently can.

I am, revnd gentlemen, wth great gratitude and respect,
One of your humble servants,
Judah Monis.²⁵

The following month they raised his salary. Two years later he married Abigail Marret. His Hebrew grammar, finally printed with the aid of the College in 1735, was the

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first Hebrew book published in North America. His course was less than fascinating, as the title page of a copy bescribbled by a "doodler" eloquently testifies. This poor victim, bored by rules which meant little or nothing to him, amended the title of his copy of the grammar. A printed line which read that the purpose of the work was "to facilitate the instruction" was changed to read "to facilitate the distruction." The author's line, "Composed and accurately corrected by Judah Monis, M.A.," was altered to "Confuted and accurately corrupted by Judah Monis, Maker of Asses!" With students such as our "doodler" who crept like snails unwillingly to class, Monis had no choice but to open a store in order to supplement his insufficient income. Harvard College was probably one of his best customers; it was accustomed to buy some of its hardware from him. He also sold tobacco.

Monis had plenty of competition in the tobacco and snuff business from both Jews and fellow-Christians. One of the most active snuff concerns in Boston was the firm of Asher and Solomon. Michael Asher, whose family had long been established in New York, had moved to Boston sometime between 1710 and 1720. However, he retained his membership in Shearith Israel and contributed to its building fund, as did his partner and two other Boston Jews. After he left New York—except for an uncomfortable period in jail as a debtor—he served as the Boston agent for New York merchants, and in addition built up a prosperous tobacco trade. In 1728 he and Isaac Solomon formed a partnership to carry on a general merchandise and commission business.

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The snuff they handled was an exclusive product; it was manufactured and sent to them by Mordecai Gomez, the New York merchant. Gomez, in 1735, became president of Shearith Israel, following in the footsteps of his father Luis.

The partnership of Asher and Solomon, though apparently lucrative, was not destined to continue. In the spring of the year in which their seven-year partnership contract expired a rift between the men was already evident. Solomon had begun to distrust Asher, how much we can see from the following letter:

Mr. Mordecai Gomez,
S'r:

I hope you'll excuse me for my desires in this, that is, that you'll please to send me word whether Mr. Asher has made returns p[er]. [Capt.] Griffith for what is due to you, because I cannot learn by him whether he has or no. He has had the money in his order there for a considerable time. Mr. Asher and I now differs very much and [I] believe shall part soon if ever. I cannot give you the particular reasons why, but would give a good deal to have an hour's talk with you for it is not proper to write everything openly. Therefore desire, if you please, not to make any contract with him without in both our names. Should take it as a great feavour to send me for my money, if it is to be bought there, a *Yom Kippur tefillah* [Day of Atonement prayer-book], because I cannot be with him with a good heart and a safe conscience at such a holy time. I do not care to write to any person else concerning it except to, s'r,

Your much oblig'd and very humble serv't,
Isaac Solomon.

Boston, July 29, 1735.

P. S. Pray let me receive an answer by them that will deliver it [the prayer-book] to myself.²⁶

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By September the partners were making arrangements to separate, and Solomon, to protect his source of supply, was eager to continue to get snuff from Gomez:

Mr. Mord'y Gomez,
S'r:

I received your favour of the 3d inst't. I am very much obliged to you for your kindness in sending the [prayer-] book, it coming in good time, and shall take care to return it with thanks after the hallowdays are over; likewise for your care in not excluding me in that agreem't with Mr. Assher.

I must inform at present that it's impossable for us to agree any longer, we haveing now enter'd into arbitration bonds, and the arbitration bonds being upon conditions that we must unavoidably part before this month endes. And am affraid shall meet with a great deel of difficulty before it is ended. I do assure you I have been unjustly dealt by; it's not ffit to write every particular; my writing is just to inform you how our affairs stand.

As to agree with you for the snuff on my own [separate] acco't, I am very willing to allow you the price you mention by reason of the difference of the money, if you think it is to your advantage and mine, not but we have all by us what we had last year. We cannot vent [sell] such a quantity as perhapps you may imagine; as for selling by whole[sale], I do assure you we cannot sell 300 le [pounds]. p. year, onely what I sell by retail, w'ch I take a great deel of trouble for being obliged to runn up and down the town to sell what wee do.

The case is really thus: When we are parted I am sinceable Mr. Assher will be obliged to hire men to do as I have done, but I have no occasion to do so, for can do as I have allready done, and am sinceable I have the custom and cann sell six pounds to his one pound, so that without he undersells shall

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have the adva[ntage]. of him, and if he does [undersell me] must be obliged to do the same.

As for the snuff mill I cannot tell whoes lott it will fall too. Parhapps he may amagine if he gitts it he cann afford it cheaper then I, and so undersell, espetially if I should have my snuff of you at that price. Nevertheless I have hadd my art many years agoe in making snuff, and cann make bold to say I cann shutt my eyes and make better than either Asser, Simonds, or any before them here, tho' I never reveal'd or br'gg'd of it as yett.

If Mr. Asser should happen to gitt the mill, and I could not shift without one, and not agree with you, I have those ffriends here that would gitt one, cost it what it will, and are willing [to] assist me. Nevertheless if the mill fall to my lott and we agree, I'll give you a bondsman for a thousand pounds for-fiture if I ever make any [snuff], but will oblige my self to take all of you at the price proposed for as long time as we shall agree.

I would have you weigh those matters well, to your adva[ntage]. as well as mine, and send me word p. post or ffirst what you think off it, because if we agree . . . I should be gladd to lett you know of w[ha]'t quallity I would have the snuff in. As for the paym't, if you desire I'll give you sufficient bondsmen for your money when it is due.

You may hear some fflying [unauthorized] stories concerning Mr. Asser and I, but must say one storie is good till another is heard.

I remain

Your very humble serv't,
Isaac Solomon.

Boston, Septem'r 8th, 1735.²⁷

Thereafter, in October, Gomez informed one of his Boston agents that he preferred doing business with Asher, but if Asher was not interested he was willing to sell to Solo-

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mon. If a deal could not be made with either, the agent was then empowered to sell Gomez snuff as best he could, wholesale or retail, for cash, credit, or for English or Boston wares. Late that same month Asher wrote Gomez:

Boston, October 27th, 1735.

Mr. Mordecay Gomez,

S'r:

My last signifyd the uncertainty who should have the bussiness, Is. Solomon or I, and for that reason could make no reply to yours of the 27th of Aug't last, which intimated that you was dispos'd to continue the supply of fifteen hundred weight of snuf p. anno, provided we would be joyntly oblig'd to pay you at New York two shillings and sixpence p'r pound.

I am now to acquaint you that the bussiness is like to fall to my share, and Is. Solomon restrain'd from persuing it in this government [colony], and therefore I add provided you think proper to continue to supply me w'th the afor'sd q[uan]ti'ty at two shill'gs and threepence, our currency, to be d[eliv]er'd here in such parcels as you shall see good, and I to make payment to you at New York at the respective times, as by our original agreement, and under the like restrictions as then concerted by us [giving us exclusive rights to your product]. I will on your ans'r transmit my obligation for that end to be exchang'd for yours to me.

I can't afford to give a larger price this year, being the remainder of the company's stock is a large q'ty w'ch I am oblig'd to take at the full worth in order to part [company], having given him [Solomon] the offer either to take or sell at that price. Therefore what I propose to you is purely to make matters easie betwixt you and me, and in order to injoy the bussiness with a mutual satisfaction betwixt us, you not being unsenceable that I have always sought and been ready

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to serve your interest in this affair, and for that reason hope you'll not injure me, w^{ch} please to consider, and believe I shall always be ready to serve your interest in this or any other affair, and remain, s'r,

Yo'r humble serv't,
Mich'l Asher.

My thanks and service to your son, Mr. Moses [Gomez]. I am sorry my engagements have not permitted as yet to answer his favour and hope he will excuse it.²⁸

The partnership was finally dissolved, it would seem, late in 1735. In the following year Asher sold his business to Mr. Stephen Deblois of Boston.

Asher and Solomon, we said, were members or contributors of the New York congregation, Shearith Israel. Indeed, we may assume that throughout the colonies there were many Jews who had come from New York or had close relations with what should be regarded as the mother community. As we shall see, it was most natural, when some New England Jews decided to build a house of worship, that they should turn for help to the Jews of New York.

Though Boston was the largest town in New England, and in fact the largest town in the country, it was not there that the new congregation was formed. There had been a small Jewish cemetery in Boston since the first half of the eighteenth century, but no permanent religious organization till well into the first half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps Massachusetts religious intolerance impeded the founding of a Jewish congregation; but New Amsterdam was also intolerant, yet Jews formed a settlement there.

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It was in Newport, Rhode Island, that Jews created a congregation, and it is probable that the formation of this congregation attracted Jews to settle there who might otherwise have gone on to Boston. But Newport was then an important commercial center too.

The initial impetus for Jewish migration to Newport had come in the middle-seventeenth century, when most of the rest of New England was belligerently intolerant and when Rhode Island offered the only real refuge for religious liberty in all the English colonies. Plain-spoken, narrow-minded John Endicott had told Parliament in 1652 that he wanted no strange religious groups in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, no Levellers, no Papists, no atheists, no Jews. The attitude of the Governor was general. In that same year the colonial legislature made denial of the New Testament cause for exile or execution, and in the years 1659-61 four Quakers were executed for nonconformity.

In 1635 Roger Williams had been banished by the bigots of Massachusetts and had fled to Rhode Island to create a new settlement. He believed that "no human power has the right to intermeddle in matters of conscience," and speaking specifically of the Jews he said: "I desire not that liberty to myself which I would not freely and impartially weigh out to all the consciences of the world besides." He was prepared, accordingly, to accept Jews in his new colony. There was some bitter resentment in New England against Williams and his settlement; Cotton Mather, the learned and heresy-hunting Boston pastor, referred to Newport as "the common receptacle of the convicts of Jerusalem and the outcasts of the land."

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Attracted by religious liberty, and possibly also by the hope of political liberty, some Jews had come to Newport about 1658, so tradition claims, less than five years after the settlement in New Amsterdam. The choice of New Amsterdam, as we saw, may well have been an accident; but the immigration to Newport was probably the result of selection.

However, there is very little evidence that there was an organized Jewish community till 1677, when a cemetery was purchased. This is the oldest recorded Jewish burial ground in the United States, and Newport was probably the second oldest organized Jewish community in the country.

While full political and civil rights, universally applicable, seem implicit in Roger Williams' teachings, it is questionable if Williams himself was in reality willing to go that far. He probably felt that a combination of religious liberty and civil toleration was all that any Jew had a right to expect. The Rhode Island charter of 1663, granted by Charles II, guaranteed to all its inhabitants that it would "preserve unto them that liberty in the true Christian faith and worship of God which they have sought with so much travail." It was probably the phrase, "true Christian faith," which served as the pretext for excluding the most enterprising Newport Jewish merchant from naturalization, almost a century later. Yet the grant was liberal for its day, but it was set in a Christian framework and said nothing about political and civil liberties for Jews.

In 1685, two years after Roger Williams died, Major William Dyre, associated with Williams in the receipt of

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the charter of 1663, brought charges against the Jews as "aliens," as a result of which the property of Jews was seized. What was behind all this?

About this same time similar charges were brought against foreign-born Jews in London. As endenized aliens, they had been exempt from the penalties and fines envisaged in the First Navigation Act, and in matters economic they had been practically on the same footing as native-born Christian merchants. But on the death of Charles II in London, in 1685, the attempt was made to cancel their endenization patents, to dub them "aliens," to subject them to special onerous taxes, and thus to squeeze them out of business. Many English merchants welcomed this prospect.

Major Dyre evidently had heard of this London proposal and attempted similar action in the Newport courts. Had he won, the Jews would have been unable to compete economically and would have been forced out of the colony.

The General Assembly had already made a favorable decision on June 24, 1684, when it permitted Jews to remain and to do business there in spite of the fact that they were "strangers," aliens. This decision of the Rhode Island authorities was really an evasion of the Navigation Acts . . . but that evasion certainly did not lie heavily on their consciences. There was a desire, for commercial reasons, to keep the Jewish merchants in town, and so, when the Newport case came to trial on March 31, 1685, the magistrates resorted to a legal technicality to decide in favor of the Jews. The motivations behind the London, the New-

port, and a similar New London effort may have been the desire to implement the Navigation Acts, or to earn rewards as informers, or to drive the Jews out of business. Whatever the motive, each attempt failed. Both in England and in America, in that age of mercantilism, the authorities decided that the Jew was an economic asset. If this was, indeed, their belief, then future events in both London and the Americas fully vindicated them.

By 1740 the problem of naturalization for American Jews was regulated by parliamentary statute: Any alien who had resided seven years in the American colonies had the right to be naturalized.

This opportunity for civil and political liberties must have attracted many individuals to America. A number of them came directly from the Spanish peninsula to Newport, and soon the city sheltered a thriving Jewish congregation.

In 1759 the community of about fifteen persons decided to build their own synagogue. They needed help and, typically, they wrote to old, established Shearith Israel:

Newport, R. Il., Adar 22d, 5519 [March 21, 1759].

Gent.:

The pious intentions of a congregation yet in its infancy, we desire, may plead a sufficient excuse for this address. Sincerely desirous to establish a regular congregation in this town, we therefore have lately purchased a suitable lot of land whereon we design to build a sinagogue. And for furthering our said intentions we have likewise by subscription raised a small fund wherewith to begin and carry on the work and which in due time we hope to see fully compleated. At present, finding our abilities not equal to our wishes for finishing

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the work in so short a time as we desire, we have resolved to crave the assistance of the several congregations in America, and as the Feast of the Passover is near at hand, a time when there will be the greatest appearance of our brethen at New York, we embrace this opportunity to acquaint you with our proceedings and intentions relative thereto, intreating you to communicate the same to the congregation at New York and to supplicate for us their charitable assistance towards carrying on this work, either by a freewill offering in the synagogue, or subscription, or in any way which may be agreeable to you.

When we reflect on how much it is our duty to instruct children in the path of vertuous religion, and how unhappy the portions must be of those children and their parents, who are thro' necessity educated in a place where they must remain almost totally uninstructed in our most holy and divine law, our rites and ceremonies, and from which place they may perhaps never have it in their power to depart; when we farther reflect on how much it is our duty to assist the distressed; and when we consider the extensive usefullness of a charity, like this for which we now supplicate assistance; we can entertain no doubt of your zeal to promote this good work.

That God Almighty will be pleased to direct your councils, prosper your vertuous actions and intentions, give us peace, and very soon send the Redeemer to Zion, is and shall be the devout prayer of, gent.,

Your obedient and very hum[bl]'e serv'ts,

Jacob Rod's Rivera, Jacob Isaacks, I. Hart, Aaron Lopez, etc., etc.

To the gent., the *parrassim* of the K. K. Seherit Israel, in New York.²⁹



Photo by Ralph M. Arnold, Newport, R. I.

THE NEWPORT COLONIAL SYNAGOGUE CONSECRATED IN 1763



Photo by Kershner, Newport, R. I.

INTERIOR OF THE NEWPORT COLONIAL SYNAGOGUE

Chapter 6

New England, 1759-1775

THE Jews of New York responded speedily and generously and received a charming letter of thanks addressed to Myer Myers and Jacob Franks. The plans were drawn by Peter Harrison, a brilliant amateur architect, who designed also King's Chapel, Boston. The cornerstones were laid that year of 1759, and the synagogue was finally consecrated in 1763. Ezra Stiles, a local Congregationalist minister, judged it to be one of the most perfect church buildings in America; Reverend Mr. Andrew Burnaby, a visiting English clergyman, agreed that it was an elegant structure but thought it totally spoiled by the school building which the Jews had attached to it. This house of worship, designed by Harrison as a labor of love, is still standing today, the oldest synagogue in the United States. Now known as the Touro Synagogue, it has become, under the terms of an act of Congress, a national historic site.

It was no slip of the pen to state above that "cornerstones" were laid; actually there were six (four for the

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corners, and two for the attached school). One of them was laid by Naphtali Hart, who was president of the congregation in 1761. Hart was an old-established merchant, and as early as 1731 had been a respected property owner. One of his daughters was named "Love," which was less exotic than "Freelove," as a contemporary Newportian had been baptized.

One of the functions of the president of the congregation was to keep a watchful eye on the local Jewish charities, which were then an integral part of the religious organization. Jewish poor were always wandering about from town to town looking for alms, a home, or even adventure. The standard technique in solving their problems was to give them immediate relief, a note of introduction to a different community . . . and transportation out of town. The following letter to the New York Jewish leaders was quite typical:

Newport, Rhode Island, 26th May, 1761.

Gentlemen:

The bearers, Mess'rs Abraham and Mathias Cohen, arrived here last week in Capt. Cuzzins' [boat] from Savanah Lmar in the island of Jamaica, and where recommended to us by the *Gabay* [treasurer] of that congregation as objects of charity, and as such I take the liberty to recommend 'em to you and your congregation. They have with them thier credentials from the several congregat[ion]'s to the same effect.

We on our parts have contrebuted as much as the nature of our affairs would admitt of at this time, and considering we our selves are petitioners [for additional money to finish our synagogue], hope there successes in this undertaking may an-

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swer thier expectation, w[hi]'ch is the sincear wishes of, gentlemen,

Your most obedient and humble serv't,
Naph. Hart, *Parnas*.

To Mess'rs Daniel Gomez and Samuel Hart.⁸⁰

During the days that Naphtali Hart was president of the congregation, one of its most active members was the Portuguese *émigré*, Aaron Lopez. He had lived in Portugal outwardly as a Christian under the name of Duarte Lopez. While still a child of but eight years of age, Duarte had no doubt heard of, or possibly even witnessed, the martyrdom of Antonio José DaSilva, the Portuguese Jewish poet, who in 1739 was burnt alive at the stake for heresy. Like most "New Christians," or crypto-Jews, Lopez was continually looking for an opportunity to flee to a land which offered him some degree of liberty and security. An older half-brother, Moses, had gone to America, in the early 1740's probably, and had settled in Newport. In 1752 Duarte's opportunity came. The twenty-one-year-old merchant fled with his wife and family and went straight to Newport. Here he was remarried according to the Jewish ritual and took the name of Aaron; his wife, Anna, was called Abigail.

Lopez struggled hard to get ahead but made little progress for almost two decades. He had a small business, buying and selling in the immediate neighborhood of Newport, and also engaged in a modest way in the coasting trade.

He bought his goods wherever he could, from jobbers and wholesalers in London and New York. One of his London sources of supply was Abraham Hart, who sent

him not only merchandise but also ritual objects such as lamps, prayer books, and *mezuzot*, the encased parchment-inscribed biblical quotations which are still placed on the doorposts of the homes of observant Jews. Unlike some other erstwhile "New Christians," Lopez was deeply determined to live as a professing Jew.

In 1760 one of the New York men with whom he did business was Benjamin Gomez, another of the sons of Luis. At this time Gomez was truly a pillar of the synagogue, gathering merit, as a pious Jew would, not only by serving as president but also by acting as circumciser for younger generations of Gomez' as they were ushered into the world. When friend Lopez prepared for a circumcision in the family, Gomez was generous with "hints" as to the fine points of the operation. In his house "opposite the Treasurer's" he dealt in molasses, sugar, and New York distilled and West India rum. The Islands supplied him with all kinds of colonial goods, including a wife from Barbados.

Lopez' chief purpose in dealing with Gomez was evidently the desire to secure a good assortment of what Gomez advertised as "sundry European goods," mostly textiles. Letters between the two men during this year were frequent. Although Lopez secured some of his wares from England, he also bought heavily from large importers and wholesalers. A struggling young merchant with little capital, he may have turned to Gomez, as he did to Levy and Marache, because of the more liberal credit extended by American concerns. The following letter gives a picture of the type of dry goods which Lopez secured from his Spanish-Portuguese compatriot in New York:

New York, June 3d, 1760.

Mr. Lopes,
Sir:

I have the pleasure of being informed by Mr. S. Hart of your safe arrivall at Newport. Hope you found your spows and whorty famley in good health as it leaves me with my daug'r who joynes with me in our best regards.

You were pleased to desire when my goods arrived to acq't you thereof with the assortm't w'ch you have at bottom. Should any of them suit you, shall be glad to send what you may please to order at the usall credit of twelve months, w'ch is what at pres't offers from, s'r,

Your most hhb'e serv't,
Benj'n Gomez.

Fine midling and corse blew black and scarlet cloths; shallones, durants, tamies, callamencos, bombozines, crapes, soeing silks, raven duck, Russia sheeting, quadroples, fine Irish linens, long lawns, black pelong sattin, silk mitts, callicos and printed cottons. Print'd lin. handk's, white bordred do., plain and silk camblots. Everlastings bl'k talfaties, damasks, clear, spotted, and stript lawns, cambrick pistol lawns, mens and wom. cotton and worsted hose. Blanketts, strouds, etc. Expect in the next ships oth'r goods w'th apar'll chex.³¹

The detailed list in the postscript reveals that Gomez was not exaggerating in one of his notes when he said that he had "sundry other things too tedious to mention."

When the six cornerstones of the Newport synagogue, Jeshuat Israel, were laid in 1759, Aaron Lopez laid the first stone, and Isaac Elizer the fourth. Elizer was a merchant and achieved some degree of economic success, but he died an impoverished man and had to be buried at the expense of the local Masonic fraternity, of which he was a member.

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Like many others, Isaac Elizer and his partner for the nonce, Samuel Moses, occasionally ventured into the slave trade. Of the northern states, Rhode Island was most actively engaged in this traffic. The Riveras had been in it since 1754 at the latest; Lopez, since 1764.

The "triangular" form of this trade was typical. A cargo, usually rum, was shipped to Africa, and this rum (or the proceeds from it) was used to buy slaves. The slave cargo was then brought to the West Indies and sold for hard coin or for native products, frequently molasses, which in turn was brought to the numerous Newport distilleries and there turned into rum which could be used for the next trip to Africa.

But, of course, there were variations of this traffic. When the price of slaves was too high, then the cargo—rum, wine, cordials, sugar, molasses, cattle, and poultry—and even the boat itself were sold. The captain would then take passage on another boat, returning home with cash or good bills of exchange. If the price of slaves was right, a load was picked up and taken to the market, usually to Jamaica.

The slave trade was very speculative due frequently to the scarcity and initial cost of the commodity. In 1762–1763 as many as 270 gallons of rum were being paid on the African coast for a prime slave. This was a very high price. Then there were losses through sickness and death in the "middle passage" back to the Americas. Profits were further cut down by dull markets, unscrupulous sales agents, irresponsible planters, and protested bills of exchange.

The following letter, sailing orders for a sloop of Elizer

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and Moses, off to Africa for a load of slaves, is a good introduction to a study of the traffic:

Newport, Octo'r 29, 1762.

Captain John Peck:

As you are at present master of the sloop "Prince George" with her cargo on board and ready to sale, you are to observe the following orders:

That you imbrace the first fair wind and proceed to sea and make the best of your way to the windward part of the coast of Affrica, and at your arrival there dispose of your cargo for the most possible can be gotten, and invest the neat proceeds into as many good merchantable young slaves as you can, and make all the dispatch you possibly can.

As soon as your business there is compleated, make the best of your way from thence to the island of New Providence [Bahamas] and there dispose of your slaves for cash, if the markets are not too dull. But if they should [be], make the best of your way home to this port, takes pilates and make proper protest [before the authorities as to the state of your cargo or vessel] where ever you find it necessary. You are further to observe that all the rum on board your sloop shall come upon an average in case of any misfortune, and also all the slaves in general shall come upon an average in case any casualty or misfortune happens, and that no slaves shall be brought upon freight for any person, neither direct nor indirect.

And also we allow you for your commission, four slaves upon the purchase of one hundred and four, and the privilege of bringing home three slaves, and your mate, one.

Observe not neglect writing us by all opportunitys of every transaction of your voyage. Lastly be particular carefull of your vessell and slaves, and be as frugal as possible in every expense relating to the voyage. So wish you a good voyage, and are your owners and humble servants.

But further observe, if you dispose of your slaves in Prov-

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idence [Bahamas], lay out as much of your neat proceeds as will load your vessel in any commodity of that island, that will be best for our advantage, and the remainder of your effects bring home in money.

Isaac Elizer,
Samuel Moses.³²

Sometime in 1761 Isaac Elizer and Aaron Lopez had applied for naturalization under the terms of the law passed by Parliament in 1740. Although only the year before James Lucena had been granted a similar request, the Rhode Island Lower House, the Assembly, denied their petition on the ground that they were Jews, declaring that no member of that religion had the right to hold any office or to vote in choosing others. The Upper House averred that foreigners in the plantations were entitled to naturalization but blandly referred them to the judges of the Superior Court.

In the following year the august court disclosed its judicial wisdom. It declared, first of all, that there were too many people already in the colony. Next it leaped back a full century, ignoring the Act of Parliament of 1740, to rule that "by a law made and passed in the year 1663, no person who does not profess the Christian religion can be admitted free of this colony."

Lopez at once turned to the more conservative Massachusetts and was naturalized there without any difficulty that same year; he was the only practicing Jew ever naturalized in that colony. Elizer was soon naturalized in New York even though he continued to dwell in Newport.

There are a number of possible reasons why Aaron

Lopez was refused naturalization in Newport: As early as 1719 the charter of 1663 had been interpreted to limit the privilege of becoming a freeman to Christians only; Lopez may have been caught in the cross fire of a fight between two Rhode Island political factions; or his petition for naturalization may have been rejected because he was as yet neither rich nor influential. In the same unlucky year, 1762, Abigail, his faithful companion in the desperate flight from Lisbon, died. She had given birth to seven children, most of whom died young. He was then still struggling to make a living for himself and his dependents.

His second wife was Sarah, the daughter of Jacob Rodriguez Rivera. Rivera had been a distinguished merchant of Newport long before Lopez married his daughter. Together with his father, Rivera had come from the Iberian Peninsula to New York; Rivera was then only a child. After a sojourn in Curaçao, Jacob returned to the mainland and settled in Newport about the year 1748. There he became one of the pioneers in the sperm oil and candle industry; he was also prominent in shipping, importing, and in the general merchandise field. His honesty was proverbial: There is a contemporary tradition that a number of years after a severe business reverse, which compelled him to make a settlement with his creditors, he paid his debts in full, though not required to do so. He took an active part in the life of the Jewish and general community. President of the synagogue, and charter member of the local Jewish social club, he also supported the Redwood Library.

Aaron Lopez, however, was not a member in 1761 when

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the Jewish club was founded; he was probably too poor to join and could ill afford the cost of the suppers or the loss of twenty shillings a night at whist or picquet. Sarah, too, presented him with a new baby almost every year; eight of her children survived. In order to support his family he ventured into all sorts of business activities: one of his chief sources of support at this time was the manufacture of candles.

Rivera, his son-in-law Lopez, and some of the other Jews in Newport had been engaged in the spermaceti candle business since at least the early '50's. The Jews may even have been pioneers in the field. The candles they manufactured were made from the head matter that came from sperm whales. This matter, when refined, produced spermaceti out of which excellent candles were molded. In the middle eighteenth-century this was probably the best candle that had yet been made, and although it was a very expensive product there was a steady demand for it.

In the early 1760's the manufacturers, several of whom were located in Newport, determined to take action in order to control the market. They were eager to further themselves and to protect their investments, and to this end they created an "agreement" in order to promote their "mutual advantage." Competition was keen, not only in the sale of the product, but also in the mad scramble to buy the raw material from the whalers: the owners and the "ketchers."

A number of historians point to Rivera as the guiding spirit in the creation of this early American "trust." But Rivera was by no means the largest manufacturer or bene-

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ficiary under the new system. The big firm in the field was O. Brown and Company, later Nicholas Brown and Company of Providence. Furthermore, the actual agreements and correspondence clearly indicate that the trust was created at the suggestion of Richard Cranch, one of the four partners of Richard Cranch and Company of Boston. The Jewish manufacturers always constituted a minority among the others in numbers and in volume of production.

The first agreement, as far as we know, was drawn up on the 5th day of November, 1761; nine firms signed, three were Jewish or partially Jewish. In this agreement, limited to New England candle manufacturers, the attempt was made to control the cost and to regulate the distribution of the raw material, to fix and maintain the commissions given to the purchasing agents, and to set the price of candles in the New England area. These businessmen also agreed not to manufacture for outsiders. They would prevent, "by all fair and honourable means," the rise of other producers. If ever the head matter became too expensive, they would fit out their own whalers. Thus was created the United Company of Spermaceti Candles. The articles adopted were to run for seventeen months.

Nine months later there was trouble. The trust was not extensive enough: the Philadelphians and the New Yorkers had not been included, and were offering stiff competition in purchasing. Certain members of the association were blandly disregarding the agreement to their own advantage. The following letter of Collins and Rivera, Naphtali Hart and Company, and Aaron Lopez throws light on the

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difficulties. It is interesting to note that the complainants here are the three Jewish firms:

Newport, 29th July, 1762.

Mess[ers]. R. Cranch and Co.,
Gentlemen:

We were not without hopes that the rational and disinterested measures you had plann'd and propos'd for the reciprocal advantage of the Spermaceti Manuf'rs wou'd have had the desired effect. 'Twas entirely with that view that we enter'd into the contract, but the following incidents, to our no small mortification, demonstrate that we are disappointed.

We have certain information that most of the factors [agents] at Nantuckett have procur'd all the head matt'r they possibly cou'd, at an advanc'd price. It does not at pr'sent appear on whose acco't they have purchas'd, but we have reason to believe they have no other method to dispose of it but to their former employers. We need not acquaint you who they are, but this we will venture to say: It is more than probable it will be rec'd, at the high price they give, at the dissolution of our articles [association] w'ch at farthest is at no great distance.

Mess[ers]. Robinson and Co. have rec'd about 50bbs [barrels]. and Mess'rs Stelle and Co., between 30 and 40, and, as they have inform'd us, the price is not ascertain'd. We have frankly told them our opinion that this is a manifest breach of the articles. Mr. Moses Lopez, who we always suppos'd was to be equally concern'd [as partner] with Mr. Jenkins, we find, is left out of the question and is going to Nantuckett to purchase on his separate acco't, without limitation. The Philadelphians have not thot proper to reply to our letter on this subject, but Mr. Thos. Richardson, who address'd them on behalf of the Company, writes to Mr. Robinson they had refus'd to write us, and we are well assured had given orders to

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their Nantuckett factor to continue purchasing at the market price, but the quantity unknown.

Besides the above hints, you'll please to excuse our once more observing that Mess'rs Browns being allow'd the liberty to give to the sellers $2\frac{1}{2}$ p'r cent more than the restricted price, has given them the opportunity of exceeding every manufacture, who acts upon principle, from the benefit of purchasing a single cask, diametrically repugnant both to the letter and spirit of the articles which were intended for mutual benefit, and not to give one manufacture the advantage of the rest.

These circumstances appear to us to have vacated our articles to all intents and purposes, and upon the least reflection you will doubtless view them in the same light; and as we have the satisfaction to believe, gentlemen, that you have conducted this whole affair, not only with probity and honor, but with the strictest regard to the general good, 'tis with reluctance we advise you for your government: that we think the articles are absolutely void and ourselves at liberty to purchase on the best terms we can.

We can with truth assure you that we have not yet procur'd or given orders for a single barrel, having without the least deviation adher'd to the contract. Neither shall we receive a single barrell this season, if we suffer ourselves to be any longer trifled with by a pretended contract not mutually bind'g.

Notwithstanding, if such judicious measures can be concerted, as will put this affair upon such a basis as to admit of no violation, they shall have our ready concurrence, but we presume it can't be done without each manufacturer has his proportion ascertained. We are, gen.,

Y'r m. obed't s'ts,

Collins and Rivera, Naph. Hart and Co., Aaron Lopez.³³

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In spite of their threat to withdraw from the association because of the recurring abuses, the Jewish firms were eager to continue the agreement. The business must have been lucrative: to burn one spermaceti candle five hours an evening for thirty days cost about sixteen dollars. New agreements were made on the expiration of the old; new partners were induced to enter the association. The owners of the boats and the "ketchers" were just as smart as the manufacturers, for they probably had an understanding among themselves to keep the price of raw materials high. By 1769 some of the New York manufacturers had already joined the trust, but there was still trouble. In the following letter Jacob Rodriguez Rivera rehearsed his difficulties to Mr. Rotch, one of the purchasing agents then in business at New Bedford:

Newport, Sept'r 26, 1769.

Mr. William Rotch,
Sir:

Your very kind favours of the 31st ult'o to me, and one of the same date, and another of the 6th curr't to Mr. Aaron Lopez and self came in their course to hand.

Should have answer'd to them sooner, but as I was obliged to consult the manufacturers in Providence and here, w'ch could not be done immediately, and then hearing Mr. Brown [of Providence] was going to your place [New Bedford], tho't best to refer it till he went, as he could in great measure inform you by word of mouth the sense of our United Compa[ny].

I freely commend your conduct in letting the head [matter] you had intrusted in your hands and intended for us, go, as you was offer'd more than we had limited you. You acted as

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a man of your integrity and honor, and was I not to get a single barrel, should not have the least reason to find fault.

It would have been a great guide to us if you could have found out for whom that head matter, bou't at such extravagant a price, was for. I cannot perswade myself it's for any of the manufacturers in the contract, and if it was, its very necessary they should be pointed out and known, etc. The Bostonians, manufacturers, had given us reason to expect they would not exceed our bounds, if nobody else set them the example; and the New Yorkers have come into our agreem't and sent us the inclosed orders to their purchacer, w'ch please to deliver in[to] his own hand.

The dulness and low price of candles (as I have already wrote you) has made us keep the closer to our agreement, as we are too sensible, that to exceed that, the bussiness will not be worth pursuing. And I think we cannot give you a more substantial proof of the truth of it then by still desireing you to keep to the price we have limited, namely £200, old tenor, p. ton, even if we don't git a single barrel. And all the rest of the manufacturers in the contract are of the same opinion, and will give their orders accordingly; for if we are to get nothing that will be adequate to the capital w'ch is necessary to be employ'd in the bussiness, we better employ it in some other branch.

If the thing would afford it, we would be willing the ketchers and sellers [of the head matter] should share with us, but the profits must be mutual, or it will labour hard with the manufacturers.

The Bostonians can [not] be, nor ought not to be, any example for us, as their situation gives them many advantages that we here cannot enjoy. No doubt they will at that rate soon be supply'd with the quantity they want, and then if no one of the manufacturers appears to give more, the price we have fixed will be establish'd, and then doubtless you'll have it in your power to procure us as good a share as our neighbours.

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If you do, you may send it as soon convenient, and we shall endeavour to make you suitable pay for the same.

We duly take notice of the article you recommend to be inserted in our articles, to avoid the pernicious practice of some of the purchacers giving way part of there commission, w'ch, we are sensible, is as prejudicial to the bussiness in general as if they advanced the price. It has always been my opinion, and I shall take due care, that particular notice be taken of that article in fraiming our articles for next season, as it's now too late to do any thing for this season. I am, with great esteem and respect, sir,

Your fr[ien]'d and h[um]'ble serv.,
JRR.

P. S. Mr. Lopez desires I would present his best respects to you and to acquaint you that he confirms on his part the foregoing, as the sudden departure of the bearer does not allow him time to write himself.³⁴

The United Company continued to renew its contracts up to the revolt against Great Britain. With the outbreak of war the British blockaded the coast, put a stop to fishing in British waters, and confiscated American ships wherever they found them. The Jewish chandlers, certainly in the New England area, were gradually driven out of business.

By 1766 Aaron Lopez had begun to expand his shipping activities. He did a great deal of business with Henry Cruger, Jr., of Bristol, then the second largest city and one of the busiest ports in all England. In this new connection with England he had bad luck for some time; by 1767 he was already in debt to his Bristol correspondent to the amount of £10,000, an enormous sum for those days. Cruger, though worried, was apparently willing to go

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along with Lopez; he was already in so deep that he probably had no choice. Lopez must have been a man of iron nerves. Years later, in his oft-quoted eulogy on the Newport merchant, Ezra Stiles said of him: "He did business with the greatest ease and clearness; always carried about him a sweetness of behavior, a calm urbanity, an agreeable and unaffected politeness of manners."

Lopez' sailing orders to Captain Thomas Brown, who commanded the brig "Charlotte," which carried with her from Newport a load of lumber, turpentine, whale oil, sugar, and even some firewood, are typical of his career at this time. They show that Lopez, like many other New England shippers and merchants, carried English manufactures, mostly consumers' goods, to the rich plantation owners in the West Indies. He was also in the business of selling his ships. Building boats for the English was one of the prime industries of the New England colonies, and American-built ships found a ready market in the mother country:

Newport, July 2d, 1766.

Sir:

The brig "Charlotte" now under your command being ready fitted for the seas, you are to embrace the first fair wind and proceed directly to Bristol where, upon your arrival, you are to deliver the inclosed to Mr. Henry Cruger, Junior, of Bristol, and follow his directions.

I am not able to determine whether you are to return directly here, or to Cork in Ireland, and from thence to Jamaica. If Mr. Cruger directs you to come back to this place [Newport] without first going to Ireland and Jamaica, I would

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recommend you to use the utmost dispatch and endeavour to be here in the month of November.

But in case you proceed to Cork, you are to apply to Mess^{rs} Lane, Bensons & Vaughan, merchants there, and follow their directions, using the same dispatch there as I recommended you at Bristol. From thence they will dispatch you with a freight for the West Indies, probable to Jamaica. But should you go to any other island, you are to get discharged soon as possible and proceed directly for Savannah La Mar at Jamaica, where you are to apply to Mr. Abraham Lopez, merchant there, where I shall lodge farther instructions for you.

In case Mr. Cruger has disposed of my two ships and remitted some effects I order'd before your arrival to Bristol, there will then be a chance of his putting up the brig ["Charlotte"] to sale. If so, and she goes off [sold], I will provide you another more suitable vessel for the trade upon your return.

I conclude recommending you in the strictest manner to make the best dispatch you can from Bristol, and wishing you a prosperous voyage, conclude with perfect esteem, sir,

Your most h[um]’ble servant,
Aaron Lopez.³⁵

Lopez’ efforts to expand his business in the 1760’s were hindered by the new economic policy of Great Britain. The English authorities, back in London, were determined to make the colonies pay, in part at least, for the expensive French and Indian War. To this end they increased duties and taxes, and they tightened all trade regulations in order to stop smuggling and to compel the colonies to do business with the English possessions only. These regulations and the retaliatory nonimportation boycotts of the Americans served to disrupt commercial relations.

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In the following letter which Aaron Lopez sent to Isaac DaCosta these difficulties are reflected. DaCosta, a scion of a then distinguished English family, had come to Charlestown sometime before the year 1750. He helped to organize the congregation and to establish the first cemetery there. For a time he served as cantor; this was a volunteer or part-time job, for we soon find him engaged in commerce.

Newport, Sept'r 17, 1767.

Mr. Isaac DaCosta,

Sir:

I am indebted to your kind fav'r of the 24th May p. my brother David which I should have acknowledged before now, but the task of business often steals me the pleasure of waiting on my good and worthy friends.

The deep concern you are pleased to express on the exit of my beloved brother [Moses, d. April 6] is a natural consequence of the mutual regard that subsisted between two sincere friends, upon whose eternal separation y'r tender sentiments are so dolefully deliver'd. The particular esteem he professed for you justly entitles him to your posthumous and cordial declamations.

The same Powerfull Being that deprived me of a good brother has deleiver'd from the reach of barbarous Inquiziton [Abraham], a younger brother of mine than the deceased, with his wife and three sons. They arrived here the 11th July last from Lisbon in a ship I order'd there for the better conveniency of their transportation. This piece of news I take the liberty to impart you, persuaded it will merit your aplauze, both as a Judeo and a friend.

The truly obliging wishes your benevolence is pleased to pronounce for my wellfare are fresh proofs of the benignity of y'r mind. May the Mighty Hand retribute so generous heart

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with multiplicity of worldly blessings and terminate all your undertakings perfectly happy. . . .

[I] Observe your late resolution of declining to accept any consignments from abroad on acco't of the badness of times, and that you cannot (as you could wish) render y'r friends so agreeable sales and quick returns. The disinterested principles that govern your equitable conduct justly excuses you with me from the imputation of your rejecting my addresses by reason of any dislike, but rather for the essential obstacles you are pleased to point out, which whenever removed, and you find any better prospect, I shall not fail reviving our commercial correspondence. Meanwhile, shall I flater myself, be continued and cherished by a friendly intercourse.

Mrs. Lopez best respects join mine to Mrs. DaCosta, your good-self, and rest of the family, being with unfeigned esteem and deference, sir,

Your most obed't and h'ble serv't,

[Aaron Lopez.]

Pray you to fav'r me with forwarding the inclosed to our mutual friend.³⁶

Chapter 7

New England: Rhode Island, 1775-1776

BY 1770 Aaron Lopez was a man of wealth and position. His ships sailed to Holland, Spain, England, Portugal, the Azores, the Canaries, and to Africa. Together with Rivera he engaged in frequent ventures in the slave trade. In the 1760's this firm sent a boat to Africa practically every year. Beginning with the 1770's the traffic was increased. In some years they sent out three—possibly even four—boats on the long arduous trip. The net return cargo landed at Jamaica ran anywhere from eighty to one hundred slaves, men, women, and children. In this trade that employed each year 100 to 150 Rhode Island vessels it is difficult to determine the relative significance of the Lopez-Rivera interests.

In this period Lopez' whalers were beginning to scour the Arctic Seas in pursuit of their prey, and before the decade had passed they had reached as far as the Falkland Isles, off the coast of Patagonia. The Rhode Island legislature less than a decade earlier had denied him citizenship

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and had ostentatiously declared that no one of his "religion is liable to be chosen into any office in this colony nor allowed to give a vote as a freeman in choosing others." The lawmakers now honored him by an appointment to an important committee which had the task of drafting a letter to His Majesty's Secretary of State on behalf of the Rhode Islanders engaged in codfishing off the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

By 1773 he was at the height of his career. He was president of the congregation. Most of his old debt to the Crugers of Bristol had been paid off, and he was carrying on a prosperous business with the West Indies. There his interests were protected by his eccentric but devoted and efficient agent, Captain Benjamin Wright. "Poor Old yankey doddle!" he called himself. There was a close personal relationship between the two men; the zealous Calvinist teased his employer on the imminence of the conversion of the Lopez women to Presbyterianism, a faith which he facetiously described as "most fatal to humanity and common honesty."

It was during the early '70's that Newport enjoyed its brief golden age of prosperity and, among its eminent merchants, Lopez played an important role. It is estimated conservatively that by 1775 he owned or had a share in thirty sailing vessels. The taxes he alone paid into the town coffers probably exceeded the total paid by the rest of the entire Jewish community. He was now one of the builders of New England's commercial and maritime prosperity, and it is to this stage of his career that Ezra Stiles referred when he wrote: "He was a merchant of the first eminence;

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for honor and extent of commerce probably surpassed by no merchant in America." The part of the statement about the "extent of commerce" is certainly an exaggeration when we recall the wealth amassed by the Salem merchant, Elias Derby. Nonetheless it shows the esteem in which this Portuguese Jewish immigrant was held by the president of Yale, who knew him well.

In a letter to his correspondent in Bristol, England, in 1765, Lopez had written that his "commanding branches," his chief interests, were whaling, fishery, and spermaceti candles. Associated with him in this industrial and commercial field, along with his father-in-law, were the Rotches of Nantucket and New Bedford. This well-known Quaker family of merchants and whalers were doing business with Lopez within a few years after his arrival from Portugal. Accepting rum and wine in exchange, they sold him whale oil and equipped his boats. For a long time the Rotches were purchasing agents for the spermaceti candle combine, the United Company. It was a member of this family, the twenty-five-year old Francis Rotch, who became Lopez' partner in one of his most daring ventures at a crucial period.

From time to time Lopez had sent ships beyond the equator. But in January, 1775, he formed, or joined, a company to send a great fleet of whalers to the Falklands. The third partner was Richard Smith of Boston and London, who later sold his interests. The partners outfitted close to twenty ships, involving an investment of almost £40,000. This was probably the biggest gamble of Lopez' career. It was doubly risky: there was no guarantee that

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they would meet with whales or seals, and, what was more significant, a war with England broke out. Because of the fear that their ships might be caught on the high seas these three entrepreneurs laid their plans most carefully . . . and craftily. Come what may, they were determined to salvage their huge investment.

By September, the battles of Lexington and Concord had been fought and Boston besieged; King George had signed the New England Restraining Act, and the colonists had been denounced as rebels and traitors. Rotch and Lopez could not afford to forget that their fleet was to operate in waters patrolled by British warships looking for Americans.

Furthermore, the fleet had to steer clear of the Brazilian coast towns and to avoid Portuguese and Spanish ships. Lopez knew from firsthand experience the fate of Jewish infidels and Protestant heretics who fell into the hands of the Inquisition.

The fleet was to proceed as expeditiously as possible to the fishery off the South American coast, moving as far south as the Falklands, filling the casks and the holds with whale oil, whalebone, and sealskins. It was to rendezvous at Port Egmont in the Islands where Francis Rotch would personally take charge. On the way back they were to stop at Dutch St. Eustatia, a neutral island, where Aaron Lopez or Leonard Jarvis, Francis' partner, would meet them.

These elaborate arrangements were deliberately designed. It might be difficult to make the run home through unscrupulous American privateers and British cruisers. Lopez

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and Jarvis intended to repair to neutral ground and let the whaling fleet know if the coast was clear for the return trip.

Another advantage in stopping at St. Eustatia would be the opportunity to pick up a load of contraband to smuggle through the British blockade. A few casks of Bohea tea would bring a high price in the American market. It was gamble piled upon gamble, a desperate venture at best.

One of the vessels that sailed for the South Atlantic was the brigantine "Minerva," whose master was John Lock. For him Lopez and Rotch wrote elaborate orders. In clarity, detail, and historic interest they are a classical illustration of the whaling activities of the New England merchants in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. They were, in all probability, written in Lopez' office:

Newport, Sept'r 4, 1775.

Capt'n John Lock,

[Sir:]

The brigantine "Minerva" now under your command, being completely fitted for a whaling voyage with sufficient stores for eighteen months, we would have you imbrace the first fair wind and put to sea without delay upon your intended cruize.

We desire you will make the best of your [way] across the equinoxial line towards the Brazil coast, touching as little time at any island or port in your way for refreshment, in case of need, as possible.

We cannot give you particular directions in this point, not knowing that there may be occasion for your stopping at all, but we must depend upon your prudence and good judgement to determine this matter, not doubting from the enquiries you have made, your knowledge and ideas of the voyage you are going upon, that you are fully convinced of the necessity of getting upon the whaling ground as soon as possible.

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We would have you be very careful in crossing the line, for by what we learn it requires a good deal of skill to find and keep in the most advantageous tract for getting thro' these calm latitudes. By attempting to get across too far to the westward you are in much danger of falling to leeward of Cape St. Augustine [Brazil]; on the other hand by keeping too much to the eastward, you may get becalm'd on the [African] Guinea coast for a long time together. By the best accounts we can collect, a southern course a little easterly from St. Jago [Santiago], one of the Verb [Verd] Islands, will secure to you as quick a passage across as any.

Nevertheless, we mean not to confine you to this course or any other contrary to your own judgment, but give you full liberty from your own knowledge, experience, and observation to improve upon these orders as much as you can for the welfare of the voyage in every point that we lay down, with an uncertainty that may naturally be supposed to arrise from our distant situation here and want of actual experience, but in all such matters as appear to us necessary to be possitive in, we shall fully expect your best attention and conformity thereto.

We flatter ourselves you will be able to get upon the whaling ground at the Brazil coast sometime in the month of November next, and we would recommend your cruizing southward after the spermaceti whales off and about soundings, until you get in the latitude of Falkland Islands. If in the forepart of your cruize you should not find these fish plenty, we have no doubt of your meeting them near the Islands, or as many vight [right] whales as you will know what to do with.

We have certain and very late information that between the latitudes of 45° and 48° south, near soundings, there is a great plenty of spermaceti whales than at any other spot we have yet heard of, altho' by many other reports it is agreed that from 26° to 36° and 40° they are found in great numbers.

We think it expedient to strictly forbid your going into any

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port or harbour or within four leagues of the Brazil coast, altho' in cases of extreme necessity as amount to little short of life and death we have a right of admission into the ports of any foreign nation which we are in amity with. Stil, under our circumstances, which is that of whaling in seas adjacent to their territories, it may be extremely dangerous to fall into their hands, and, probably, from the least shadow of pretence, fatal not only to our interest [but also to] your liberties. We must further enjoin you to have no connection with any Portugueze or Spanish vessel in any way whatever, but when you approach any vessel, we would have you hoist your white signal at your foretop gallant mast head, and in a few minutes hawl it down, and after the same space of time hoist it again, and if you are answer'd in the same way, you may be assur'd it is one of our vessels, but if not, we desire you will keep intirely clear of them unless by any other circumstance you can be fully satisfied they are English whalemén.

We mean for you to cruize as beforemention'd until such time as you have filled your casks, or until by other necessities, from bad weather or accidents, you may have occasion to make some port. You are then for many reasons, particularly that of insurance, at all events to proceed for Port Egmont in the Falkland Islands where you are with all the rest of our vessels upon these voyages to rendezvous and recruit, and where, if no unseen accident prevents, you may be assured you will find our Francis Rotch, with whom you will be able to consult and mutually determine upon what further measures it may be expedient to adopt for the remainder of the voyage.

It may not be amiss for us here to declare that we mean not at these Islands to restrain or confine you in any one point whatever contrary to your own inclination, but that you shall be at liberty either to winter with our Francis Rotch there, or to return home again as soon as possible after your cruize is up and the vessels refitted. Only this we have a right to expect, that if it appears to you that there is a great prospect of ad-

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vancing the voyage in the winter in the seal fishery and other-ways, that you will not think of rejecting such an opportunity of improving both your own and our interest, or even have a desire to return home without making that experiment.

If by fatal mischance, which may Heaven avert!, our Francis Rotch should be prevented from prosecuting his present fix'd determination of visiting Falkland Islands, it may be necessary to give you some directions how, of yourself, you are to proceed, but the certainty in our minds of your receiving his further directions and assistance (unless sickness or death should intervene) makes it appear to us almost unnecessary. Nevertheless should it so happen, we must recommend to you to exert yourself for the good of the voyage in the best manner you are capable. By working up the staves, headings, and hoops that are on board your vessel, you may make sufficient of casks with what you now have on board to fill the vessel intirely full. With the naval stores, plank, and boards, and your assistance to each other, you may be able to clean and grave [pitch] your respective vessels and repair their sheathing etc., in a compleat manner, there being not only the advantage of a commodious harbour at Port Egmont but a great rising and falling of the tides, with good place to lay vessels on shore, which will assist you very greatly in what work there may be a necessity of doing to the bottoms of the vessels.

After you have thus fitted the vessels and recruited yourselves, should you hear nothing further from either of us, we give you liberty to attend the seal fishery to fill what casks you may have empty or to take them on board [, to] leave the harbour, and cruize back again towards home, not doubting should the weather permit that you may in this case meet whales enough on your passage to fill you up.

On your return we would have you stop at St. Eustatia in the West Indies, where you will certainly receive what directions may be necessary either from our Aaron Lopez or from

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Leonard Jarvis, which you are to attend to in every particular so far as regards our interest.

We must desire you will keep a very particular journal of the winds, weather, and soundings during this voyage, and note down such latitudes and places where you see the greatest plenty of whales, likewise all such vessels as you see or speak with. And if you should see any vessels coming this way, you must not fail to write in a particular manner to Aaron Lopez in Newport, Leonard Jarvis in Dartmouth ["New" Bedford], or William Rotch in Nantucket, as may be convenient, and if by chance you should fall in with any vessels bound for England, write in the same manner to Geo. Hayley, Esq., merchant in London, and let him know your situation and success.

We must likewise desire your particular care of your provisions and stores, a plenty of every kind being now on board; your voyage may be long which will naturally require a good deal of prudence and oeconomy to make them hold out.

You are doubtless impress'd with a full sence of how much importance it is in these voyages to preserve the men in a good state of health. We have on our part taken care to provide all necessary small stores for this purpose, and can only caution you against suffering them to indulge too much in salt meat and such things as are found by experience to promote the scurvy.

With these orders we give you a draft [map] of the Falkland Islands upon a large scale, with courses and soundings laid down in an explicit manner, which will be of service to you in finding out the harbour you are destined for.

We have nothing further to add at present but to desire you will pay a steady attention to the foregoing, and to wish you prosperity and success.

We are your friends and owners,

Francis Rotch,
Aaron Lopez.

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P. S. Should any material accident happen to you in going, or after you get off this coast, so as to disable you from prosecuting your voyage without imminent danger, we would have you at all events avoid returning to either [any] of the American colonies but proceed as shall be most convenient to either of the undermentioned places, and exhibit to the gent'n we have mention'd this part of your orders, and either of them will give you every assistance in their power.

St. Eustatia: apply to our friend Sampson Mears.

Lisbon: Mayne and Co.

Madeira: Blackburne, Sanchez, Burrows and Co.

Gibraltar: Livingston and Turnbull.

Teneriffe: Mahony and Woulfe.

Cadiz: Duff and Welch.

Barbadoes: John Thomson and Co.

If unavoidable necessity obliges you to make the first port in your power, and we have not named it, you must do the best you can.³⁷

Five of the fleet were held up and convoyed back to England by the British warships "Renown" and "Experiment." Among the five was the "Minerva." Her papers were seized, and her owners' instructions ultimately found their way into the Public Record Office and have thus been preserved for us. By the time these vessels were sent in as prizes to London, Francis Rotch was already in the English capital—ostensibly or actually a loyalist—determined to be on the ground if anything happened to the fleet . . . and to the investment. He was already ensconced in London, therefore, in November, 1775, when the whalers were brought in, and on the plea that he and his partners were loyalists, he managed to recover the captive ships. It was the contention of both Rotch and Smith in a November

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petition to Lord North—and it was true for the most part—that their vessels had left for the whaling grounds prior to June 1, 1775, the deadline, and were thus not subject to the limitations and penalties imposed by the New England Restraining Act. It is true, they conceded, the “Minerva,” and possibly others, had cleared after June 1st, but that was only because the obstructionists back home who were hostile to Government would not let them sail sooner!

Another argument was used by Rotch and Smith to induce Lord North to release their boats. The plea was that this company, out of loyalty to Great Britain, was determined to create a great whaling and candle industry in England by exploiting the relatively new South Atlantic area from Brazil to the Falklands, rather than by haunting the overrun Greenland fishery. The bait was held out to the British that this new field would ultimately employ thousands of men and hundreds of ships. The candle manufactory that was to be established would be in personal charge of Aaron Lopez, an expert in this field who was now at Jamaica on his way to London. (So they said!) Last year, they reminded the prime minister, England had imported £120,000 worth of whale oil alone. This industry could be transferred to England, and they could do it, but our ships must be returned and our American whalers released, for they are the only sailors in the world competent to do the type of job we contemplate!

The boats were released sometime between December, 1775, and February, 1776. This was made clear in a letter written on the 20th of February by Francis Rotch to Aaron Lopez in America. Rotch informed him of what

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had occurred and ventured the assumption that Lopez had already left—or suggested that he leave!—for Jamaica. There he might claim, on the ground that they belonged to Rotch, a Londoner, and to Lopez, a Jamaican, any of the company's other whalemens that might be seized by the alert British warships. It was a bold stroke of two men who were determined to salvage what they could of a huge investment.

Precious little was saved. Two of the five ships that were released by the English proved to be so badly damaged that they were dismantled and sold for the value of their hulls. A number of the boats that made the Falkland voyage went down at sea. One, the "Abigail," finally limped into the Thames from those distant islands with a cargo of oil, but without the greater part of her sheathing; it had been kept afloat only through the brilliant seamanship of her captain, and was subsequently scrapped.

The dispersal and destruction of this fleet, the tragic story of the nameless ones who died, the long silent years of waiting for fathers and brothers, sons and husbands who would never return, is one of the unsung sagas of American maritime history. For Lopez and his associate it was a major disaster.

The ups and downs of the career of Lopez were typical of the risks and hazards which lay in shipping ventures, the characteristic form of New England trade. The experience of Moses Michael Hays is another case in point.

Hays was born in 1739 in the colonies, probably in New York City. His father, one of six Hays brothers who had

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come originally from Holland, had Moses trained as a businessman and watchmaker. In 1767, young Hays and Aaron Lopez were already trading with one another: the Newport chandler was bartering spermaceti oil for barrel staves from New York. Evidently Moses wanted to engage in the lucrative West Indian trade and considered Newport the ideal place to begin. In 1769, at the age of thirty, he came there and entered into a partnership with a Myer Polock. They built and freighted ships for the next two years but ran into a streak of bad luck.

Typical, no doubt, was their experience with the brigantine "Mary." On June 26th, in 1769, this ship sailed from Honduras with a cargo for Amsterdam but sprang a leak the following day and turned back into the Bay for repairs. Five days later the "Mary" again headed for Europe but on the 15th ran into a terrific gale that lasted twenty-seven hours. The ship labored and strained in the high seas, lost the two topmasts, sprang a leak for the second time, and managed to return to Newport on the 29th of August only by keeping one pump going all the time.

Once more the carpenters climbed over the boat and started their repairs; nine days later the ship moved into Narragansett Bay to wait for a fair wind to start the long voyage to Amsterdam. But while it was anchored off Canonicut Island, properly moored and secured with cable and anchors, a terrific northeaster blew up "such as hath scarcely been known in the memory of man." Driven from her anchorage by the tempestuous wind and sea, the boat was cast ashore and the crew barely escaped with their lives. Of course the brigantine and her cargo were insured,

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but disasters at sea were hardly conducive to financial success. The losses of Messers Hays and Polock were so heavy that they were soon bankrupt, and both men were imprisoned for debt. Aaron Lopez was one of their creditors; no doubt he suffered many similar setbacks.

Released from prison in December, 1771, penniless, young Hays determined to stick it out in Newport. He opened a shop, engaged in general merchandising, sold stationery, and was working hard when the Revolution broke out. Then a new difficulty confronted him.

Like all other colonies, Rhode Island had its share of loyalists, for it has been estimated that one-third of all the colonists were loyal to England. To compel their adherence to the revolutionary cause, the Rhode Island Assembly, in June and July, 1776, passed a number of test acts demanding an oath of loyalty from all suspected Tories. As far as we know there was no decisive factor such as wealth, station, clerical conservatism, or national origin that predetermined one's adherence either to Great Britain or to the newborn republic.

Among the seventy-seven Newport people who were under suspicion were four Jews: Isaac Touro, the "Jew Priest," the cantor of the synagogue; Isaac Hart, a distinguished merchant, one of the pillars of the synagogue and a man of considerable culture; Myer Polock; and Moses Michael Hays.

These four were faced—as were their Christian counterparts—with the necessity of taking the oath of loyalty, and they objected on various grounds. Touro declined to take the oath for the double reason that, first, since he was not

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naturalized, he was still a Dutch subject, and, second, it was against his religious principles. We know from other sources, however, that he was a Tory.

Myer Pollock's refusal was based, ostensibly, on the objection that the oath was "contrary to the custom of Jews." It is not to be doubted that Pollock's truer motive was the fact that he too was a loyalist, since his name is coupled with that of Isaac Hart in an address made to the English House of Commons by Edmund Burke, where Pollock and Hart are named as men who showed devotion to the English cause.

More direct knowledge of loyalism is available in the case of Hart than of Pollock. Hart gave as his basis for refusing to sign the oath the fact that it was not demanded of all, but only of those suspected of loyalism. Hart's property was seized in the course of the ensuing months, and in 1780 he was expelled from Newport. He reached a fort on Long Island as a place of refuge, and there he was shot, bayoneted, and clubbed to death in an attack by the Continentals.

Touro, Pollock, and Hart, then, were definitely loyalists. On the other hand, Hays was a patriot, and he resented bitterly the questioning of his loyalty. In refusing to sign the oath, he demanded that his accusers be brought before him. He prepared for them a formal statement in which he affirmed his attachment to "this my native land," and asserted his conviction that the war was just. But he declined indignantly to take the oath because he considered the procedure to be an unjust imputation of disloyalty. Like Hart, he protested that the test was not required of all.

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That he was a Jew, continued Hays, made it all the more unjust for the authorities to demand an oath of loyalty from him, because these authorities were denying him the rights and opportunities of citizenship to which he was constitutionally entitled. They were demanding the responsibilities of citizenship without conferring the privilege. And, added Hays, Rhode Island was not alone in this slight, but other colonial legislatures and even the Continental Congress had failed to make provision for the rights of Jews.

Hays made his formal statement on July 12, 1776, at the Colony House in Newport. Five days later, still resentful that his patriotism had been questioned, he sent the following letter:

To the Honorable, the General Assembly of Rhode Island now setting at New Port:

Moses M. Hays of New Port begs leave humbly to represent to your honors that he hath ever been warmly and zealously attacht to the rights and liberties of the colonies, and ever uniformly conducted himself consistant with the rest of the good and friendly people of these colonies, and allways despised inimicall principles, and as farr as one person can testify for another, numbers of creditable persons can testify. Yet, on the 12th inst. was sighted [cited] by the sheriff to appear at the court house on that same day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon when I attend'd accordingly, and being called was informed by your Hono'ble Speaker [Metcalf Bowler] that an information had been lodged against me, among a number of persons, of being inimicall to the country (Mr. Sears, Mr. Fowler, and Mr. Geo. Wanton and some officers [of the Rhode Island Brigade] present). I denied, and do still deny

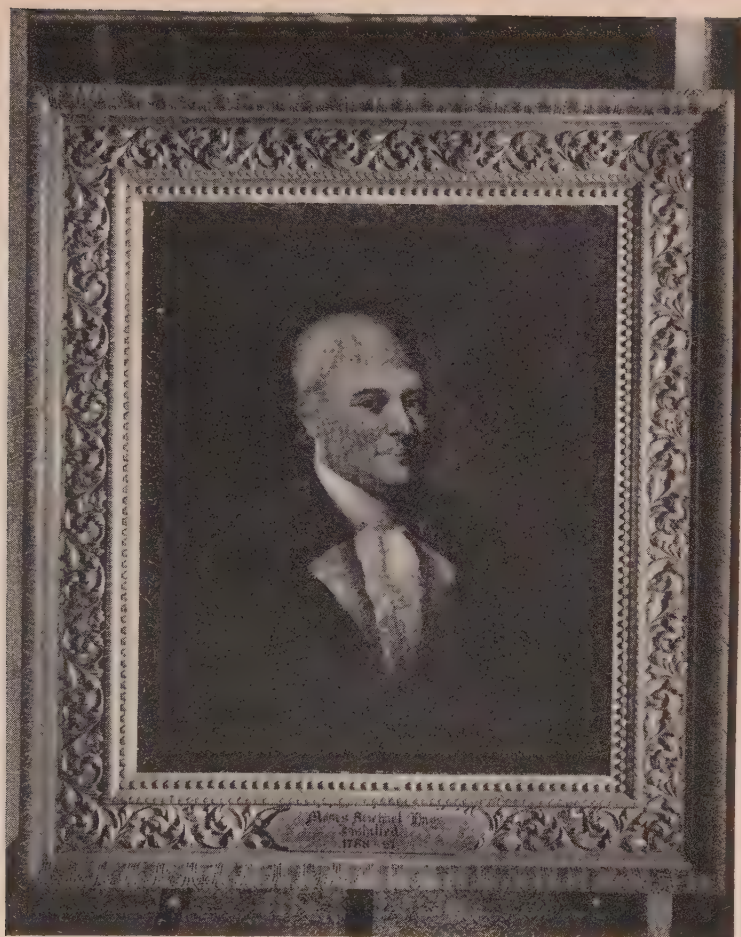


Photo by Benjamin Morse, Inc., Boston

MOSES MICHAEL HAYS, COLONIAL ENTERPRISER

1) The Subscribers do solemnly & publicly declare that in beholding
 the like measure & application to which the Anti-Slavery
 Extension are now engaged against the "rich & numerous" of Great
 Britain on the Part of the said "Christian" & "pious" people, that
 they will not thereby nor indirectly "aid & abet" the
 efforts to "be heard" whatever, to the end that the "Christian"
 "people" of the "extension" of the present time, and that are not
 bound in the "extension" of the "extension" of the "extension" in a

Handwritten text: *Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, written vertically.*

July. 1841

1790000

Phon. 2

1871.

1144

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Room 241

George G. G. G.

1111



215

1875

... ..

Done 19. 11. 1772

Handy book

October 11, 1911

MOSES MICHAEL HAYS AFFIRMS HIS FAITH IN
THE UNITED AMERICAN COLONIES, 1776

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holding or entertaining such principles, and desired to know my accusers and accusations.

I was answered by Mr. Bowler's reading a paper purporting to be a complaint from the officers [of the Rhode Island Brigade] that there were many suspected inimicall persons in town and naming them. [I] Desired they might be called on. And no other allegations appearing against me, I declined signing the test [oath of loyalty] then for reasons I gave in writing, which will no doubt be laid before your Honors and trust they will appear justifiable.

I ask of your Honors the rights and priviledges due other free citizens when I conform to everything generally done and acted, and again implore that the justice of your Honors may interfere in my behalf, and will give me leave again to call for the cause and my accusation of inimicality, that I may have an oppert[unit]y of vindication before your Honors. I am, with great respect,

Your Honors most ob. and most hb'e serv't,
M. M. Hays.³⁸

New Port, July 17, 1776.

The objection by Hays and by Hart to the administering of the oath only to those whose loyalty was suspected was voiced by many others, and in course of time the oath was uniformly required of all. Then, finally, Hays subscribed his name "solemnly and sincerely," and promised that he would "heartily assist in the defense of the United Colonies." Apparently thereafter Hays was not disturbed again.

Chapter 8

New England: Connecticut, 1775-1781

ONE of the older Jewish contemporaries of Moses Michael Hays was the merchant Isaac Mendes Seixas. Born in Lisbon in 1709, he came via Barbados to New York about 1738. He had some relatives in the English mainland colonies, but apparently he was the first bearer of the name Seixas.

Seixas' courtship and marriage were accompanied by some turbulent and stormy scenes. He began to court Rachel Levy, the half-sister or stepsister of Mrs. Jacob Franks. The Frankses, who were *Ashkenazim* (Germanic Jews), did not like Seixas; possibly they resented the assumption of aristocratic background which *Sephardim* (Spanish Jews) have manifested from time to time; or more possibly their reservations were personal, since they seemed to doubt the sincerity of his intentions. Seixas' uncle, Rodrigo Pacheco, frowned on the impending marriage for the simple reason that Rachel was a German.

The rough road was made rougher for the couple when

Mrs. Franks told Rachel quite openly that she disapproved of Seixas, and Rachel so informed her sweetheart. The ruffled suitor continued his courting, but in the home of some other member of the Franks-Levy clan. In the last act of this high drama of love and courtship, the climax was reached when Seixas, for some reason or other, refused to invite his Portuguese compatriots to the wedding. All this in a little community of about one hundred Jews!

Yet, though Pacheco frowned on his nephew's marriage to a German, he himself had close social ties with the rich Frankses. He gave Mrs. Franks tidbits, such as olives, and books; among these was the celebrated *Lettres Juives* of the French philosopher, Marquis D'Argens. Perhaps friendship was one thing to him and "intermarriage" quite another.

Seixas continued to live in New York for a short time after his marriage, but in the middle 1740's he moved to Newport. The exact date is not known. One son, the future *bazzan*, Gershom Mendes Seixas, was born in New York in 1746. Another son, Benjamin, was born in Newport in 1748. Benjamin moved back to New York in his late teens or early twenties, was accepted as a freeman there, and became an active member of Shearith Israel. He was a saddler by trade, but there is very little evidence that he practiced his craft for any length of time. The father remained in Newport.

When the Revolution broke out, Isaac Seixas was among those who fled from Newport before the invading English when they occupied the city in December, 1776. The place

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of refuge to which he went was Stratford, a little Connecticut town on the Boston Post Road.

There most of the refugees were from New York. Among them were the Seixas brothers, and probably still other members of the family. Indeed, there were so many Jewish refugees in Stratford and the immediate vicinity after 1776 that it was possible to hold a religious service with the minimum number of ten adult males present.

There was no congregation in Connecticut before this time; as a matter of fact there was not to be a permanent synagogue for another sixty-four years. Individual Jews had peddled wares, traded in horses, and done other business in the Connecticut river towns since 1659, but they were not welcomed in that colony which reflected so strongly the influence of neighboring Massachusetts.

Individuals who came to Hartford and to other towns did not remain very long. In March, 1685/1686, John Carsen, who had chartered the brigantine "Prosperous," landed a load of goods at New London. On the fifteenth of the month a warrant was issued, and his goods were seized and impounded pending investigation and trial. The charge made by Major William Dyre, the surveyor general of customs for all the British-American colonies, was that the owner of the goods, John Carsen, was a Dutch Jew, and thereby an alien, and accordingly not entitled to trade in the English plantations by the terms of the Navigation Acts. We have no record of the decision of the Admiralty Court in this Connecticut case. We may assume, however, that Carsen retained his cargo; he contended that he was a native of England.

New London—where Carsen had his troubles—apparently did not encourage the settlement of Jews. It was one of the few large towns of Connecticut in the eighteenth century which did not shelter even a single Jewish family. An attitude toward Jews as manifested in 1753 by Andrew McKenzie, a merchant, may account in some measure for their absence. Hearing that one of his correspondents, Miguel de St. Juan, was using the services of a [Spanish?] Jew, he wrote St. Juan and reproached him for “being led by the nose by a faithless Jew whose nation sold their God for money and crucified him afterwards. How cou’d you think that he [a Jew] cou’d be true to you [a Spaniard] who is of a place where none of their sect is tollerated?”

Throughout this entire period, the people of Connecticut were governed by the charter of 1662, which declared that the maintenance of the Christian faith “is the only and principal end of this plantation.” The charter remained in force, in effect if not in substance, until 1818.

Because of such religious exclusivism, of which the charter is but a minor evidence, no Jewish communal life was possible in Connecticut. Individual Jewish families, however, were found in most of the larger towns. The Pintos, for example, had been in Stratford, on and off, since 1725; but though of Jewish extraction, they were atheists or deists.

When the Seixas family assembled in Stratford, Isaac found a pleasant task to perform for his son Benjamin—to ask his friend Hayman Levy for the hand of his daughter Zipporah in marriage. The prospective groom was thirty, and the bride eighteen. The Levys, as we know, were New

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Yorkers, but the father had fled to Philadelphia as the British approached New York. Accordingly, Isaac Seixas wrote to Hayman Levy at Philadelphia. The stilted and formal tone of the letter would give no indication that the Seixas' and the Levys knew each other well:

Stratford, Novemb. 13, 1778.

Mr. Hayman Levy,
S'r:

It is at the request of my son Ben. Seixas that I presume to trouble you with this, to acquaint you that he has inform'd his mother and my self that he has a very great regard for y'r daughter, Miss Ziporah Levy, and shou'd think himself very happy if he cou'd obtain your consent and approbation, as well as your amiable spouse's, and all others connected with the young lady, in permetting him soon to be joined to her in the sacred bonds of matrimony.

We have no manner of objection thereto, and most sincerely wish it may meet with your parental approbation, and that it may prove a source of joy and happiness to all our families. I hope this may find you, good Mrs. Levy, all the children and conexions enjoying perfect health. Mrs. Seixas and all our family join with me in our most respectfull salutations, and I remain, s'r,

Your most obedient and humble servitor,
Isaac Seixas.³⁹

Ben married Zipporah in the following January and, undoubtedly, brother Gershom made a special trip to Philadelphia to officiate. It was a very successful marriage, certainly in one respect . . . they had seventeen children. Seixas stayed on in Philadelphia until the war was over. He returned to New York about the same time as Gershom. In later years Ben became one of New York's distinguished

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Jewish citizens, a founder of the New York Stock Exchange, and a president of the synagogue.

The Seixas', as we have said, were but one of the many families that took refuge in nearby Connecticut. Fairfield County was just across the state line from New York; it seemed far enough for safety, yet near enough for the exiles—Gentiles and Jews alike—to keep an eye on property or other interests in New York. Besides Stratford, other towns which sheltered them were Stamford, Norwalk, Wilton, and Danbury.

The Solomon Simsons took up their residence in Danbury and Norwalk. Solomon's father, Joseph, settled down in nearby Wilton.

Joseph Simson had come to New York City via London in 1718 when he was about twenty-two years of age. His original home was Frankfort on the Main; the family name was Sampson but had been Anglicized in England.

Years later, when Simson was a widely known and highly respected octogenarian, he took delight in describing New York as he knew it in the early eighteenth century. It was a small one-street town, and much of the later city was still laid out in orchards.

When he was about twenty-six, he married Rebecca Isaacs of Long Island. The pair lived together for almost sixty years before Rebecca passed away.

Uncle Nathan Simson, who had brought Joseph over to this country, was a very successful businessman. The nephew was not. Nathan returned to England in the 1720's and left Joseph to shift for himself. The fact that the younger Sim-

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son later became the *samas* ("beadle") of Shearith Israel demonstrates beyond any doubt that he was not making his mark in the world of commerce. But by 1747 he had been admitted as a freeman of the city, had opened a shop, and was enjoying some measure of prosperity. His mounting success may well be due, not to his own efforts, but to the ability of his eldest son Sampson, the real founder of the family fortune. In that same year the erstwhile beadle became the *parnas* of the synagogue.

The new president of Shearith Israel was no ordinary shopkeeper. He was, it would seem, an excellent Hebraist, and his own generation referred to him as the "Rabbi." Together with a scholarly man like Manuel Josephson, he sat as a member of the congregational ecclesiastical court. He was the proud possessor of a very fine vocalized and annotated Hebrew manuscript of the Bible, which he described in correspondence with the distinguished Hebraist, Dr. Benjamin Kennicott of Oxford. Dr. Myles Cooper of King's College in New York was also in touch with the learned Jew.

During the fall and winter of 1776 Joseph went into exile because he was a warm Whig. The native of Frankfurt could not forget that back in the old country he had been compelled to wear a "Jew-badge," and to take shelter at night in a miasmic ghetto. At eighty, therefore, he did not hesitate to take his staff in his hand and leave the city that had sheltered him for almost sixty years.

It was at Wilton, his home for the duration of the conflict, that Ezra Stiles called on him. The attraction that

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drew the president of Yale to Wilton was Simson's reputation as a student of Hebrew.

After the war the aged *émigré* returned to his home in Manhattan, and here it was, in 1784, that he received one of the Lees of Virginia, Arthur, the diplomat and congressman. Lee was impressed by the intelligence, alertness, and the friendliness of his host, but particularly by the fact that this Jew had blue eyes and a ruddy complexion. It developed in the course of the conversation that the old man's hero was George Washington, whom he compared to Joshua of old. The king of France was going to make the American general one of his marshals; Washington was the greatest soldier in the world!

During the interview someone present remarked that the Amsterdam Jews were about to purchase a huge tract of land in the back country of Georgia and were going to colonize it exclusively with coreligionists. Simson said it would be a mistake; Jews prospered most, not when isolated, but when they mixed with the people of the land.

To their dismay, the Simsons, the Seixas', and other exiles, who had fled to Fairfield County for safety in 1776, found that they had literally gone out of the frying pan into the fire. The English and the Tory General William Tryon started a series of raids in 1777 that increased in violence and reached a peak in July, 1779. All the harbor and river towns were exposed to fire and plunder and the hazards of guerrilla warfare.

Long Island and the Sound were completely in the hands of the enemy. The Norwalk citizens, feeling themselves greatly exposed, petitioned the Connecticut state authori-

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ties, in October, 1777, for an armed vessel to patrol the Sound. Among the Jews who signed the petition were members of the widespread family named Mears.

The name Mears was very probably an Anglicization of the Dutch Moers. The fact that they were of German origin did not preclude the use in their letters of Spanish and Portuguese phrases which they had picked up in the Sephardic synagogues or from their Spanish-Portuguese friends. Similarly, Gershom Mendes Seixas never hesitated to use Judaeo-German terms . . . especially for the foods which tickled his palate.

A branch of the Mears family settled in Jamaica in the late seventeenth century, while another settled in New York some fifty years later. Still another branch seems to have remained in England.

Samson Mears, a merchant, was one of the numerous agents and clients of Aaron Lopez. Some years before the Revolution he had been in St. Eustatia, but by the time the war was in full swing he was among the New York refugees in Norwalk, Connecticut. He had a great deal of family for company, including the husbands of his three sisters: Solomon Simson and the brothers Myer and Asher Myers. Simson was a merchant, Myer, as we know, a silversmith, and Asher a coppersmith.

In 1779 and 1780, Samson carried on an active correspondence with Aaron Lopez, then in Philadelphia. Lopez was trying to recover his schooner "Hope" and its valuable cargo from the hands of Connecticut privateers, who were frequently little better than pirates. Though busy fighting his case before the Continental Congress and the Connecti-

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cut courts, Lopez nevertheless continued to carry on an extensive interstate trade. This could be done best through coastwise shipping and inland wagon-transport; overseas commerce was hazardous because of the British fleet.

Mears was trying to obtain velvets, woolens, worsted stockings, men's clothes, tobacco, snuff, spermaceti candles, iron wire and salt from Lopez. But the goods were frequently late in arriving, and by the time the carts came lumbering into town, prices had changed, or the market was overstocked, or the paper money had depreciated. Business was carried on under most trying circumstances. Textiles were at a premium because of the successful British blockade.

Salt, too, was quite an important item. Mears traded it for other stores, primarily for flaxseed, which Lopez wanted. In April, 1779, the rate of barter was thirteen or fourteen bushels of flaxseed for one of salt. The staples listed in the prices current included sugar, West India rum and domestic "Continental" rum, Madeira wine, tea, and domestic and foreign salt.

Lopez was in the market for another important staple, flour. The laws of some of the American states forbade its export since it was a scarce item.

Mears was ready to do business with Lopez on a commission basis, as the latter's agent, or as a partner. He was frequently on the road executing commissions for his chief, riding as far as Newport, or pushing on to the "happy hills of Leicester" even in a snowstorm. On one occasion he balked at an extra seventy miles on a sick horse through winter mud to New London. At times he was away for

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weeks. His letters frequently would not come through, so he would return to a distraught family which had conjured up the worst.

The vicissitudes of a bonnet-box of plumes for the women of the Lopez clan are an eloquent commentary on the difficulties of transportation, if not on the vanity of woman. Lopez bought these plumes in Philadelphia early in 1779 while prosecuting his case before the Continental Congress. Having engaged a cumbersome overland cart, he sent them in a large box to Mears. On their arrival, Mears, aware that the Lopez women at Leicester laid great store on such finery, examined them carefully to make sure that nothing was damaged. He learned that a Norwalk neighbor was driving to Boston, so he arranged to have the plumes taken along, to be turned over to one of Lopez' agents, and then forwarded to Leicester. But the box was too big to be fastened onto the sulky, and it was sent, instead, by fast ship to Providence and thence on to its final destination. To make sure it would be protected adequately, Mears sewed it up carefully in two of Lopez' sheepskins which he had for sale in his shop. The chances are that it arrived safe, for we hear no more about it in the correspondence.

The difficulties of transportation were caused only in part by the bad roads. During the war there were hostile forces on all sides, regulars and guerrillas, to say nothing of the customs officers at the borders. Teamsters hesitated to leave home with their horses in those parlous days. Mears once scoured the countryside for twenty miles to find a man willing to take a load of goods to Philadelphia, and the man he finally found agreed to make the round trip for

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about \$450 (paper money), exclusive of his expenses which amounted to \$307.

Lopez dealt also in alcoholic products, and not the least of the hazards of transportation was the teamster: As a true son of New England the teamster liked his rum, and if he carried a hogshead of "spirits" it was almost inevitable that he would drill "spoil holes" and siphon off a few gallons to while away the tedium of a long slow journey. After one trip Mears found a wantagé of nine gallons!

The following letter is typical of the Mears-Lopez correspondence:

Norwalk, January 20th, 1779.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,
Dear Sir:

Yesterday came here a team load of two h[ogs] h[ea]'ds of merchandize, one of spirits, and two barrs of lead, forwarded by Mr. Josiah Blakeley of Hartford. He informs me he could not procure a team to carry it further than this place. I have sent out to engage one to carry it on to you, which shall be done with all the despatch the nature of the season will admit of. Tho' I had no acco[un]t what the h[ogs] h[ea]'d of spirits should contain, yet I thought it necessary to examine the contents, and found by an inch rule (not having a gu'ging rod) a wantagé of five and one-quarter inch's, of wh'h I advised Mr. Blakeley by the return of the teamster with whom he is to settle. I also discovered several spoil holes about the h[ogs] h[ea]'d and shewed them to the teamster, who seemed to know nothing of it. However, if the loss is sustained between this [Norwalk] and Hartford, I make no doubt proper steps will be taken by Mr. Blakeley.

In my last of the 13th cur[ren]t p'r post, to wh'h be pleased to be refered, I mention'd a person's having seven or eight hundred bushles of flaxseed, which Mr. [Solomon] Simson and

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self found to be very good. I have purchased it at two dollars, which I shall continue to do till I have got your quantity. The teamster delivered me two of your caps, a worsted and linen one. He says Mr. Blakeley desired him to call at a place between this and Hartford for your overalls and book where he had forwarded them, but he forgot the place and taking a different road has not brought them. If they come to hand before I send off the team (wh'h I very much doubt) they shall be sent along [to Philadelphia].

Mr. Simson and family joins in our best respects, and be assured I am, with esteem, d[ea]'r sir,

Your friend and h[um]'ble serv't,
Samson Mears.

Rum is at 20 dol'rs and rising.

A parcel of ready made buckskin breeches will sell well from forty-five to sixty dollars pr [pair]., and some ready dress'd skins, some sheep skin breeches also will do.⁴⁰

The third anniversary of the creation of the American republic was no holiday for Samson Mears. Not that he was worried about the enemy; he had written in April that Norwalk was so small that the English "have greater objects to attend to than this insignificant place. . . . I don't apprehend much danger here from the enemy." But Mears felt low on July 4, 1779, and he poured out his heart to Lopez, who was always ready to listen to any man. Mears felt cooped up. The restrictions on trade enforced by the neighboring states had almost brought business to a standstill. He was sick and tired of an idle life. Therefore he suggested that Lopez and Rivera join with him in a company to speculate in Continental currency. People were beginning to buy it abroad; it was being quoted on the markets.

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Mears was ready to establish a company in Amsterdam and in his old stamping ground of St. Eustatia.

Little did he realize that beginning on the morrow he would have other problems which would so engross him that he would have no time to think of starting a new business in the West Indies, or anywhere else. To distract Washington and to get at his flanks, Sir Henry Clinton urged General Tryon to attack the villages along the Sound again. This Tory needed no second invitation. On the 5th the English began the most devastating of their raids on the Connecticut shore. Tryon struck at New Haven, Fairfield, and other towns. On the 11th he and his German mercenaries reached Norwalk. They burnt houses, barns, and churches, plundering where they could, exhibiting "cruel, barbarous, inhumane, and unmerciful conduct and behaviour," and destroying even "wheat in the sheaf," and "grain in store." How wrong Mears was with his prognostication to Lopez that Norwalk at least was safe!

Mears fled from Norwalk to Wilton, up the Norwalk River, and from there wrote an account of Tryon's raid:

Wilton, July 30th, 1779.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,
Dear Sir:

The 9th inst. in a great hurry I address'd a few lines to you, accompanying your leather breeches, skins, and snuff p'r Mr. Wentworth, which I hope has been safe deliv'd you.

My apprehension then of the destruction of Norwalk was realized early in the morning of the 11th. To discribe the scene with all its horrors and the distress of its inhabitants require a much abler pen than mine. The 8th in the morning the approach of the savage enemy as far as Green's Farms (about

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five or six miles from Norwalk) threatened me with their immediate visitation, and I was fortunate enough to get the goods I sent you among some of our cloathing and removed a few miles out of the town till Wenthworth could carry them further. And as the progress of the enemy was by some means stop'd, we improved the remainder of that and the next day in removing our numerous family, with what effects we could procure teams, to carry off to some small distance from the town. And altho we were closely employed till the hour of Sabbath, we were obliged (from the difficulty of procuring teams) to leave a considerable part of furniture and other valuable effects in our respective dwellings, that has to the great distress of some of our families been consumed with the houses, and is most extensively felt by Myer and Asher Myer[s] and M[oses]. Isaacs, the two former being deprived of a very considerable part of their tools.

In this reduced situation we were going from house to house soliciting a shelter, and happy we were to get into the meanest cot. We truly realized the Anniversary Season with all its gloom that our predecesors experienced. [The anniversary of the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem was observed July 22d.]

Judge of our situation when a room of about twelve feet square cont[aine]d between twenty and thirty persons, old and young, from Friday till Sunday morning, when the attack on the town (which was about three miles distance) was pronounced by an incessant firing of cannon and musquetry and the awful appearance of vast columns of smoak ascending from the conflagrated buildings. This scene terrified the women and children that they thought their assylem no longer safe there and precipitately set off, some on foot and some in a waggon further up the country. And what added to our distress was an incessant rain when we were so illy provided against it, not having a cloak in company, nor a shift of cloathes with us, they being scattered about the country wherever we could get a teamster to carry them. So that we were obliged to dry

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them on our backs, and we continued to rove from place to place till this hospitable roof of Mr. Aaron Cardoza's was humanely open'd to our use, with every friendly service he can contrive to render us, and we cannot reflect on his benevolence without receiving a considerable alleviation to our calamitous circumstances.

As his house is but small for the families in it at present contains, and he has turn'd out of the best apartments, we shall make our stay no longer here then to collect our scattered effects and get provided with some places more to our respective conveniences. And until we obtain that, you may direct any letters you may please to honor me with, to the place, to the care of our present hospitable host.

I am sorry to advise you that the want of sufficient number of casks to transport you[r] flaxseed has involved you in the general loss of the town. Of the number of casks I had engaged to be made I had just collected between twenty and thirty, had not time to have them filled, and the impossibility of getting teams proved a further hinderence to my strong inclination of securing your property. The same cause exposes me to the loss of some rum in the store. In short, it is to that only that our families and many others may impute their losses. Those that had teams were so selfish as to prefer their own trivial domestick employ to the pressing calls for the preservation of their distressed neighbours effects by refusing to come, tho' pressingly solicited with ample offers of reward.

To our unsettled situation and the separation of my books and papers from me at an other quarter, you'll be pleased to attribute your not having your accounts by this conveyance. My endeavours to effect it as soon as possible shall be employ'd in the mean time. Let the united regard of all our families be acceptable to you and yours, and with great sincerity, believe me to be

Your ever esteem'd friend and very humble servant,
Samson Mears.

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P. S. By an order from our Governor, there has been an account taken of the loss of houses, barns, stores, and grain, for what purpose we know not. Your seed is given in with them. I think the loss of houses, exclusive of barns and stores, amounts to 127. Be pleased to make my best regards acceptable to my good friend, Rivera, his spouse, and the rest of his family, and let him know that I shall, when I am more settled, give my self the pleasure of addressing him. My best regard awaits [your son-in-law] Mr. Mendes and family. As also to Mr. Jacobs and his sons, and pleas to let him know his daughter and son, with all the rest of our family, are in health.⁴¹

When the Myers', the Mearses, and the Simsons crossed the Connecticut border in the summer and fall of 1776 and sought safety in patriotic Norwalk, they were probably welcomed into town by Michael Judah. He was a permanent settler who had been living there for at least thirty years. As far back as 1746, Judah had been sending orders from Norwalk to the Gomez' of New York. It is possible that originally he financed his little business on the £5 which the New York congregation had lent him on his note.

After the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, in 1748, which brought King George's War with the French to an end, a colony-wide war tax of five per cent on imports was removed. Unfortunately, many of the merchants, not envisaging the end of the conflict, had bought large stocks in advance at high prices. When the treaty was signed and prices slumped, they found themselves saddled with heavy inventories which had cost them more at wholesale than newer goods were then selling for at retail. Needing relief badly, the merchants of the county petitioned the Assem-

bly for the return to them of the unexpended sums that had come into the treasury in the form of the five per cent duty on imported merchandise. In 1749 Judah joined the other merchants in town in a petition to the Connecticut General Assembly.

Among the shopkeepers who signed this petition were Isaac Pinto and Andris Trube, who, like Michael Judah, were old settlers. At least these three of the twenty-two merchants in the county were Jews.

Michael Judah married a Christian, Martha, the daughter of Joshua Raymond. It was surely not an easy step for him to take, since he was a loyal Jew and bent on maintaining his affiliations with his fellow-Jews. When, in the course of time, Martha gave him a son, Michael turned to Mr. Abrahams, the ubiquitous *mohel* of New York, and asked him to circumcise the child. This was accomplished on November 23, 1756. It is obvious that an observant Jew would want his son to be circumcised; it is not clear, however, on what basis Abrahams performed this rite for the child of an unconverted Gentile woman. Martha Raymond Judah probably never became an adherent of the Jewish faith. At all events, the child entered the world as David, the son of Meir, which proves incidentally that Michael was only the civil, not the religious name of Mr. Judah.

Twenty years later, in 1776, young David was a soldier in Captain Gregory's Company in the Connecticut line. Ultimately he made his home in neighboring Fairfield, married Constance Bennet, and became one of the town's leading citizens. He was, in the course of time, lost to Judaism. Among the scattered Jews living in the remoter towns,

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there seems to have been a general tendency toward religious assimilation and complete submergence into the local Christian community. Naturally there was variation in individual Jewish loyalty; but conversion through default, because there was no Jewish community, was not unusual. It is not surprising that Anshil Troib, after trying earnestly to maintain his Jewish affiliations and ethno-religious habits, also fell away from his father's faith and was given a Christian burial as Andris Trube, mentioned before.

In the attempt, then, to maintain himself as a Jew even under the most difficult of circumstances Michael Judah was hardly typical. He stubbornly persisted, living and dying as a Jew. He was able to save himself "Jewishly," but not his child. The inventory of his meager estate after his death included a "killing knife," obviously the *halif* used by the *shohet* in ritual slaughter. Evidently he provided himself with kosher meat and poultry.

In 1780, when the Revolutionary War was in full swing, Judah possessed about £1,200, the result of a lifetime's work and saving. With this tidy sum he felt assured of a modest degree of comfort in his old age; his wife, it would seem, had already died. When wartime inflation set in, he tried to protect himself by putting his money into goods. With the permission of the authorities he brought in a load of sugar in 1777 and sold it at a profit. But he decided then to hold on to his paper money, confidently expecting that it would soon be stabilized. It was a vain hope; he lost practically everything he had. In his desperation he turned to Lopez and Rivera in Newport:

New England: Connecticut, 1775-1781

Norwalk, November the 28th, 1780.

Gentlemen:

As I am under nesessety, I hope you will excuse my boldness in addressing my self to you. I have done but little business this four years, and what little I have done has been done to disadvantage on account of the depreation of the money.

When these times begun I had about twelve hundred pounds, good money, that I could call my own, and as I had nothing else to depend upon but a little traffick to git a support, I laid it out in the artickel of suger, and at that time expected to advance my self greatly by it, and kept them by me some time before I disposed of them.

Soon after I dispos'd of them the money bigun to depreciate fast, and by the advice of my friends I kept the money by me for some time, I expecting it would be good in time. But to my misfortune it sunk so fast that I got but little or nuthing for the hool [whole], as low as a penny for a doller. So that I have all most sunk my hool substance so that I am not able to carry on any bussiness, and as I cannot go to New York for supplies, and you are gentlemen that has goods on hand and willing to do all the good you can to people under misfortunes, I beg that you will befriend me, to let me have a small assortment of goods. I am so far advanc'd in years that if I don't do something, I shall soon spend what little I have left.

You may relye upon me that I will be puntual to my engagements to you, either in money or any kind of produce that you shall chuse.

Goods will sell well hear and quick if I should be so fortunate that you will let me have a supply.

I beg you will favour me with an answer from you. I do not mention the quantity, more or less, but leve it to you to let me have as much as you think proper. This, gentleman, is the truth of my hool affairs. Please to ask Mr. Ralph Jacobs [of

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Newport, Solomon Simson's brother-in-law]. He is knowing to it.

No more at present but rain.

Your very humble servant,
Mical Judah.

To Mr. Jacob Dilevarey [De Rivera]
and Mr. Aron Lopous.⁴²

In his will Michael left his son David £5. Was this the bulk of his possessions? Or is it possible that the will showed Michael's displeasure that his son had broken completely with the traditions of the fathers? Michael left his residual estate to the Jewish people of New York: one half to the synagogue and the other half to the poor widows and orphans of the community.

His burial took place in New York. Curiously, the funeral expense was paid for by another dead man! Isaac Adolphus, another Jew, had died owing Judah money. Judah's death, in 1786, occurred before the Adolphus estate was settled. The congregation merely asked Hayman Levy, the administrator of Adolphus' estate, to pay the expense of Judah's burial. It was just like a bill of exchange, no problem at all.

Even though Michael may have cut his son David off with but £5, he was hardly depriving him of any great wealth. He had little more to leave, unless there were assets of which we do not know. Michael died impoverished, a victim of the currency inflation caused by the Revolution. The inventory of household and other belongings was appraised at £8.

We do not know what Lopez and Rivera did for Judah. It is not safe to assume that, following their natural bent,

New England: Connecticut, 1775-1781

they gave Michael a line of credit. The last years of the war were hard years for the Newport Jewish merchants. While they were trying to straighten out their accounts and to collect some of their debts, they found to their dismay that their clients and agents, instead of sending remittances, were seeking to borrow still further or to secure additional stocks of goods. For example, in August, 1781, Lopez was favored with a recital of hard times in a letter from one of his customers, Joseph DePass. This merchant was at that time located in Woodstock, Connecticut. A Sephardic Jew, he may have wandered in from Charlestown, South Carolina, where there had been a family of this name since 1738. Finding himself unable to pay Lopez, he, too, resorted to the brilliant idea of asking for more credit.

Woodstock, 15 August, 1781.

Honoured Sir:

By the arrival of Mr. Benj'n Jacobs [a nephew of Solomon Simson] I rec'd a verbal message from you which gave me great uneasiness to find it was not in my power to accomplish. You may depend on it that I have been very unlucky this two months, as the trade has been very dull occasion'd by the people harvesting. When that's done, mine, I hope, will commence, God willing. Have been obliged to do my endeavours to raise some small matter to settle all my debts before I go from hence which will be to my new shop next week, when and where hope that m(a)y removal will be reciprocal both to myself and creditors. And as soon I have settled Mr. Jacobs, shall return to collect my debts, of which you may depend on being the first person that I shall pay as far as I can.

I know your indulgence has been such that with shame to my self, may it be said, I did not nor could not perform my

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duty in my engagements, yet must crave your farther indulgence, and hope in a short time after my removal to be able to pay a part if not all what I owe. The worthy Mr. Rivera [your father-in-law] can tell in what situation my shop is now, by which you may see if I have enough to pay my just debts. I cannot in conscience ask any more favours. But you know, in order to attract custom, we are obliged to furnish a shop as much assorted as possible, tho' little of each article. Therefore, if I can crave a little farther of your help, I make no doubt it will enable me to pay you the old debt much sooner, as the place where I am going is more populous, and you are certain every body comes to a new shop thinking thereby to purchase much cheaper. Therefore if I have such things as is most vendable [saleable], will then afford me a good assortment. The things that I shall want, Mr. Jacobs has a list, and if you chuse to let me have them, shall then think myself doubly indebted to you for your favours, besides paying you well for them.

Pray, dear sir, don't take it amiss what I write. You have been so good to assist me in my first beggining, therefore beg it as a favour you'll continue it, and it shall be my chief study to forward myself by my assiduity and punctuality in paying you, all as soon as possible, for it gives me great uneasiness to think have not been able to have settled with you before, but must tell you that instead of diminishing in my shop have added to it daily, so that having good sales may then be able to finish [paying] all my old accounts.

Cannot proceed without first asking after your good family's health; hope they are all well—as these leaves me at present—to whom you'll be pleas'd to tender my best regards in general and particular; you'll receive the same sincerely, and believe me to be, d'r sir,

Your true friend and most h[um]b[l]'e serv't,
Joseph Depass.⁴³

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Whether DePass got more credit or not, he managed to pull through this economic crisis. Shortly after the death of Lopez, he was engaged in business, no longer in Woodstock, but then in Newport. He became an active member and supporter of the Newport synagogue. He prospered in trade; indeed, when the Lopez assets were liquidated about 1790 the shoe was found to be on the other foot: DePass was now a creditor, and in order to satisfy a debt owed to him, the executors were forced to sell 14,473 Continental dollars. They brought in less than £4 in real money.

Chapter 9

New England, 1779-1791

ABOUT a year and a half before the DePass letter, Lopez received a note from another friend, Captain Joseph Anthony. Since 1770, and possibly earlier, the Captain, who commanded his own sloop, had been in constant touch with him. Engaged primarily in the coast run between Newport and Philadelphia, Anthony served as one of the merchant's agents in the latter city. He would send Lopez a sort of newsletter quoting prices of commodities, which he would thereafter transport to Newport in his own sloop.

Both Lopez and Anthony were among those who fled from Newport upon the British occupation. Anthony went to Exeter Township, in one of the eastern Pennsylvania counties, where he scrabbled for a living on a small farm. Learning from a mutual friend, Mr. Josiah Hewes, a Philadelphia merchant, that Lopez was in that city, he wrote him, on January 27, 1779, begging for news of his old friends of Newport.

He was particularly eager to hear from Lopez because

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he knew him to be "intilegeble," and he wanted to hear "tho' no doubt the account would be distressing yet one is fond of knowing the particulars."

Seven days later Lopez wrote his answer.

Philadelphia, February 3d, 1779.

My dear and very worthy friend:

How shall I express my gratitude to you for the satisfaction you have given me with the rec[eip]t of your friendly and obliging favor of the 27th ulto. which this moment has been handed me by our mutual friend, Mr. Hewes, who telling me its bearer returns again to Exeter tomorrow morning, I would not miss the opportunity of acknowledging its agreeable contents, and gratifying your wishes of hearing from me, from my family, and some thing from the distress'd inhabitants of our once flourishing Iland [Newport].

But before I render you this intelligence, permit me to tell you that I am extreemly happy to learn that the Almighty has been pleased to guide you and good family to so safe an asylum, and that *there* he has blest you with health, peace, and plenty arround you, during these times of publick and almost universal callamity. But what I esteem still a greater blessing, endowed you with a gratefull heart, susceptible of all those divine bounties, which I pray may be continued you with all the additional felicities this sublunary world is capable of affording. For my part I have the pleasure to acquaint my good friend that I consider myself under still greater obligations to Heaven, having hitherto enjoy'd every one of those inestimable blessings you are pleased to tell me of, without the least merit or title to them; am therefore to acknowledge myself infinitely more thankfull for so mercifull dispensations.

Since we left our Island [Newport] my principal object was to look out for a spot where I could place my family, secured from sudden allarms and the cruel ravages of an enraged

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enemy. Such a one I have hitherto found in the small inland township of Leicester, in the Massachusetts Bay, *where* I pitch'd my tent, erecting a proportionable one to the extent of my numerous family on the summit of an high healthy hill, where we have experienc'd the civilities and hospitality of a kind neighbourhood; and moved in the same sphere of business I have been used to follow, which, altho much more contracted, it has fully answer'd my wishes. And you know, my friend, when that is the case, it never fails of constituting real happiness. Add to this the satisfaction of having for a next door neighbour your truly well wishing friend, my father-in-law, Mr. Rivera, who with his family I left in good health, spending in peace the fruits of his last summer's labour on a small farm. The old gentleman [now sixty-two years of age] improves with much the same *farming faculties* you tell me you cultivate yours, and I can farther inform you that while his hands have been employ'd in that usefull art, his agitated mind has uniformly accompanied yours to poor Newport where I do still hope, we shall soon have the pleasure of meeting each other again and re-enjoy those injur'd habitations, we have so long been deprived of, with all satisfaction.

By this week's post, Mrs. Lopez has inform'd me that the Widow Lee, who had the liberty of going down from Providence in a flag [of truce] to Newport, after staying there some days, she had the indulgency of returning to Providence, and being engaged to nurse my daughter, Mrs. Mendez (who I have the consolation to tell you leaves [lives] also near me and next door to our good neighbour, Capt. Jno. Lyon, formerly of Newport). This Mrs. Lee, coming directly on her return into our family, inform'd Mrs. Lopez that the poor inhabitants of that town have been very much distress'd this winter for the want of fewell and provisions, those individuals of my society [Jews] in particular, who, she said, had not tasted any meat but once in two months. Fish there was none at this season of the year and they were reduced to the al-

ternative of leaving [living] upon chocolate and coffe. These and many other calamities and insults the wretched inhabitants experience ought to excite our thanks to that Great Being who gave us resolution to exchange at so early a period that melancholy spot for that we now are enjoying.

Your dwelling house I understand has suffer'd much. Your neighbour Augustus Johnson was found dead at his house. My neighbour Gideon Sesson's wife is crazy, and what I lament most, is, that the vertue of several of our reputable ladys has been attacked and sullied by our destructive enemys—so much for poor Newport.

Capt. Benj. Wright [my agent] continues at Jamaica. His zealous wishes to put me in possession of some part of the large property I have had lock'd up in his hands since the commencement of this war, led him to address me with three vessels loaded on my sole and proper account, all of which have been taken by our American cruizers [privateers]. The first falling in honest hands was delivered up to me by a reference agreed to by the parties. The other two were libelled and contested, one of them was adjudged at Providence to be restored to me; the opposite party appealed to Congress. The third and most valuable [the schooner "Hope"] was (contrary to the opinion and expectation of every spectator) condemn'd at a Connecticut Court of Admiralty. I appeal'd to Congress, which has brought me here [to Philadelphia] in full hopes of obtaining redress.

Mrs. [Benjamin] Wright was left porly at Newport, when Nurse Lee came away, which prevented Mrs. Wright coming off in the same flagg [of truce], as she intended, but will do it soon as she recovers. I have ofer'd the poor distress'd woman all the assistance in my power to grant her, as I esteeme her an object of real merit.

Now, my dear friend, I have only to add my sincere thanks for your kind invitation to spend a day or two with you at your habitation. I shall inform myself (not being acquainted

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where Exeter lays), and if I can anyways make it convenient to call on you, may expect to see me. Meantime permit me to announce you and Mrs. Anthony every good wish pure esteem can suggest, being very truly, dear sir,

Your affectionate friend and humble servant,

[Aaron Lopez.] ⁴⁴

During that year, Lopez pressed his efforts to repossess some of the property which had been seized by American privateers. The process must have tried Lopez' famous urbanity. One friend described the privateers in good lusty Hebrew as *ganabim* ("thieves"), and warned Lopez that depositions were being collected to prove that his captains were Tories. Another described the sea-thieves, in the vernacular, as "voracious pirates." But Lopez finally did manage to retrieve what was his.

It seems to have been quite usual for Gentile and Jew alike to appeal to Lopez for help. Our friend Moses Michael Hays, now of Philadelphia, underwent the common hardships of war-time scarcity and the resulting unbridled inflation and fall of the dollar.

Philadelphia, 21st Sept'r, 1779.

Dear Sir:

Just in season to celebrate the faste [of the Day of Atonement yesterday] I got to this place, so that I am not yet able to say what measures I shall pursue respecting my designs.

From the real friendship I bear you, and apprehending service may accrue to you, I take this occasion to inform you of the state of business here, as farr as is yet come to my knowledge. A generall disaprobation appears among the trading people. It is no secret to say that fixed prices are at an end, and what goods that are now selling is at the most enormous

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prices that have ever yet transpired in the course of the warr. To quote any particular article would be fruitless. Let it suffice that every usuall article sold is now beyond all conception, that is, w[h]ere any are to be had. There appears a scarcity, wether real or artificiall I have not had any opp[ortunit]'y to determine.

I did propose getting some woollen goods here. These I find so rare and so high that I decline buying any; and if you will do me the favor of forwarding about 12 yds. of flannell and as many of lowest priced linen to my family at Tower [Hill, near Newport], I shall place its amo[un]'t either in your hands or here, as shall be most agreable to you.

I hope the little boy is long ere this perfectly recovered of his wound. Assure your lady and family of utmost respect, and am, very truely, dear sir.

Y'r mo. obd. sev't,
Mos. M. Hays.

I am almost ashamed of this scrawl but time will not permit me to copy it. I expect to be here some time. I tender you my services and shall be happy to be favored with a line from you per return of the post.

Let Mr. Jacobs know his son is well and tenders his love and duty.⁴⁵

Lopez had a New England agent named Benjamin Jacobs who is possibly the man referred to in the postscript. Jacobs was a name common among both Jews and Gentiles; there were Jacobs' in practically every Jewish colonial community of any size.

The chief claim to fame of Moses Michael Hays rests on his prominence in the Masonic order. Freemasonry had come from England in the 1720's. These humanitarian fraternities of cultured and broad-minded men promptly wel-

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comed American Jews as social peers and fellow-human-beings, and Jews entered them with great eagerness. There was as yet no emancipation in any European country. The Naturalization Act of 1740, touching the American colonies, was a beam of light after centuries of darkness. The early eighteenth century saw the advance of political toleration, the growth of the concept of natural law, and the gradual acceptance through deism of universalism in religion. But it fell to the Masonic societies first to provide the medium through which Jews met their fellow-men on terms of equality. Jews responded to the opportunity; they not only joined the various Masonic associations but even became active as leaders and organizers.

There is evidence, of dubious authenticity, that an obscure Masonic fraternity, which apparently did not survive very long, was established by Jews in Newport as early as 1656 or 1658; this doubtful evidence suggests that Jews brought the first Masonic fraternity to North America. In the 1730's there were Jews in the Masonic lodge organized in Savannah; and before the close of the eighteenth century they were found in the various lodges in virtually every one of the thirteen colonies.

Few Masons were more active than Hays. It has been suggested with some degree of probability that he came into contact with Masonry in 1760 during a visit to England, where a number of well-known Anglo-Jewish merchants were already active in the fraternity. As early as 1768 he had been appointed a Deputy Inspector General of the Rite of Perfection for the West Indies and North America. The authority granted him stemmed ultimately,

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in theory at least, from the Prussian King, Frederick the Great, Grand Master of European Masonry. Let it be noted that this monarch, two decades earlier, had promulgated for the Jews of his domains a draconic statute from which Masonic humanitarianism was completely absent. In 1781 Hays appointed Deputy Inspectors General of Masonry in eight American and West Indian colonies. All but one whom he appointed were Jews.

In the year after his own appointment, in 1769, he had established King David's Lodge in New York, and in 1780 he re-established it in Newport. There exists a letter of condolence written in behalf of the Newport lodge to the widow of a recently deceased member, Robert Elliott.

New Port, Novem'r 7th, 1781.

Dear Madam:

King David's Lodge express great honor done them in the favor of your letter of yesterday's date delivered them by Brother [John] Handy; have voted it to be filed in the annals of the lodge, and have directed us in their behalf to acknowledge your polite attention.

The acts of attention and friendship we had the melancholy occasion to conferr on our worthy departed Brother Elliot arrise from the duty incumbent on us as the offsprings of the same antient parents, and more particularly enforced by the obligations we owe each other. As members of our ancient fraternity we sympathise with you in condolance on the loss of your best friend whom, we are most assured, is changed a transitory irksome existance for an immortall bliss in the heavenly kingdom where, we now trust, he is joined to the celestial train of happiness.

We know how painfull is the task of momentary seperation, and how heavy it must labor in the breast of your tender and

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delicate composition, but when we reflect on the rectitude of divine dispensations, we are lead to confess the unerring hand of Heaven.

May that Great Disposer of all Events shelter you and your little brood under his divine wings of fatherly protection, and sustain your fortitude in your present state.

We are instructed by the lodge to offer you their best services both in a conjunctive and private capacity, and to assure you that the memory of one of our so aimable members will ever cherish a lively sence of affection in their and our breast for you and your dear family, and we are, with the highest esteem and respect, dear madam,

Y'r mo. ob. h'dservant,
Moses M. Hays.⁴⁶

Mrs. Elliot.

After the Revolutionary War ended, Hays may have sensed that the great days of Newport were over. He moved to Boston, and there attained at last the financial success which had been eluding him. Hays naturally became one of the leaders of Masonry in Massachusetts. From 1788 to 1792 he was Grand Master of one of the Grand Lodges of the state; his deputy in 1791 was Paul Revere.

Like many others in his generation, he, too, sought public office, but his attempts in this direction were never realized. In September, 1789, he wrote to his friend General Henry Knox, Secretary of War, asking him to use his influence to secure a federal appointment for him as Collector of the Port at Newport. That same month he wrote Washington also, asking for the position, but nothing came of it. It was Hays's intention, had he received the collectorship, to turn his business in Boston over to his son Judah, who was then

in Europe making the "grand tour." Years later, in 1798, he ran for the office of state senator in Suffolk County, but was overwhelmingly defeated at the town meeting which took place in Faneuil Hall.

Hays became a highly respected member of Boston society. He was accepted into the best circles in spite of the fact that prejudice against Jews was deeply rooted in that conservative community. Politically he seems to have been a Federalist. A supporter of Harvard College—probably its first Jewish donor—he was known for his many kind attentions to the poor. His integrity and mental powers are attested to not only by admiring Christian contemporaries, but also by his success in commerce and trade. He carried on a large insurance business, lent money, engaged extensively in the sale of merchandise, encouraged the China trade, and joined in the establishment of an iron foundry. He carried on a correspondence with Robert Morris (1782) on the subject of taxation, finance, and the creation of a "solid medium." Together with Stephen Higginson, the New England merchant and banker, and a number of others, he became one of the organizers, in 1784, of the Massachusetts Bank, now the First National Bank of Boston. Before the century came to a close, he helped form the Massachusetts Mutual Fire Insurance Company (1798) which was the first of its type in Boston; his name headed the list of the petitioners who sought the charter.

Obviously his was a good name, and he was a person of much influence. For example, there was a movement to legalize theaters in Boston. Some of the New Englanders, and the Bostonians in particular, had for generations looked

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with suspicion upon the institution of the theater. The theater had been banned in Boston in 1750, and again in 1784. Then, in 1790, a member of the American Company petitioned for its re-establishment under proper regulation, and the petition was rejected. The clergy, of course, was opposed for religious reasons: It was considered a dangerous source of frivolity and immorality, a menace to impressionable youth. But some of the intellectuals also looked askance at it as a symbol of the effete English culture and civilization from which had come political oppression, and which might serve again as an instrument of the rich and the conservative. Gradually, however, opposition to the reopening of a theater in Boston weakened, for it was being sponsored by the cultured and the socially prominent who enjoyed the respect of both the intelligent and the wary.

The cudgels on behalf of a theater were taken up by thirty-nine of the best citizens of the city, including Hays. In the following year this responsible group requested the selectmen to put the matter to a vote at a town meeting.

Boston, 8th Octob'r, 1791.

Gentlemen:

We, the subscribers, aware of the propriety and advantages of well regulated public amusements in large towns, and being desirous of encouraging the interests of genius and literature by encouraging such th[e]atrical exhibitions as are calculated to promote the cause of morality and virtue, while they at the same time conduce to polish the manners and habits of society; and it being repugnant to the principles of a free government to deprive any of its citizens of a rational and innocent entertainment, which is calculated to inform the mind and improve the heart, while it is affording a necessary relaxa-

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tion from the fatigues of business and the perplexities of care,

Respectfully solicit the Board of Selectmen, that they would insert an article in their next warrant for calling a town meeting, to take the opinion of the inhabitants of this town on the subject of admitting a theatre in the town of Boston, and whether their representatives shall be instructed to use their endeavours to obtain a repeal of an act passed in July, 1750, intituled, "An act to prevent stage plays and other th[e]atrical entertainments," which law in the year 1784 was revived and continued for fifteen years, or to take such other measures relating to the premisses as to the said inhabitants shall appear proper.

We are, with great respect, gentlemen,

Your most h'ble servants,
James S. Lovell, etc.,
M. M. Hays, etc., etc.

The Gentlemen Selectmen of the Town of Boston.⁴⁷

When the meeting was held in Faneuil Hall the pro-theater faction won out. A requisite bill was offered to the state legislature, but meanwhile, in 1794, a theater was opened. While the legislation was still pending, Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* was produced, but went off the boards after a raid by order of Governor John Hancock. Some of the Governor's enthusiastic and moral supporters—led by a gang of sailors—cheerfully suggested to him that they would tear down the building if he gave the word.

In 1773, Reyna, the sister of Moses M. Hays, married the cantor or "Rabbi" of Newport, Isaac Touro. Occasionally the Newport congregation did have a real rabbi in its midst, some wandering scholar who stayed for a brief visit, rested a while, collected a little money, and then wandered

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on. Such a man was the Sephardic Rabbi or *Haham* Haim Isaac Carigal, a native of Hebron in Palestine.

Carigal came to Newport the very year that Isaac Touro was married. The Palestinian was about forty years of age, and he had spent nearly twenty of them wandering all over the world collecting money, no doubt for the schools and the poor of Palestine and particularly for his native town. During the few months that the learned *haham* lived in the city he struck up a close friendship with the Reverend Ezra Stiles, then a pastor in Newport. Stiles was a student of Hebrew and the cognate Oriental tongues and was one of the most erudite Americans of his day. He was very eager to perfect his Hebrew and to know more about rabbinic customs and literature. Years later, when he taught the sacred tongue at Yale, he told the students, who found the Hebrew language "very disagreeable" and who objected to memorizing the Hebrew Psalms, that these "would be the first we should hear sung in heaven, and that he would be ashamed that any one of his pupils should be entirely ignorant of that holy language."

Though Stiles first cultivated Carigal for his knowledge of Hebrew and rabbinics, he ultimately developed a real affection for him. After the rabbi left the continent in July, 1773, the two kept in touch with each other through Hebrew, Spanish, and English letters, until the rabbi died in Barbados.

In May, 1781, just about four years after the death of his learned Palestinian friend, Ezra Stiles, then president of Yale College, wrote to Aaron Lopez, who was still living in his haven of refuge at Leicester, Massachusetts. He asked

that Lopez present to the College a portrait in oil of the late rabbi, pointing out that "it would be honorable to your nation as well as ornamental to this university." Lopez assented gladly and asked the Newport artist, Mr. Samuel King, who was then living in Boston, to undertake the commission; this was in the month of August. On May 28th of the following year, Aaron Lopez was drowned in Scott's Pond while on a trip from Leicester to Newport. Ezra Stiles wrote a note of condolence, on September 11th, to Lopez' father-in-law, Jacob R. Rivera, and at the same time acknowledged the receipt of the Carigal portrait which Rivera and others had paid for. Rivera answered the note in which President Stiles and the Corporation of Yale College acknowledged the receipt of the Carigal portrait and expressed their sympathy on the death of Lopez.

Leicester (State of Massachusetts Bay),
Dec'r 20th, 1782.

Worthy Gent'n:

Your much esteemed fav[or]. of the 11th Sept'r last did not come to my hands till two months after its date. I was happy to be by it informed that Mr. King had transmitted you in good order the portrait of the learned *Haham* Isaac Haim Carigal, the which you proposed (after framed) it should be deposited in the Publick Library of Yale College.

The honor you are pleased to pay the memory of that learned man, as well as to those that had the pleasing satisfaction of contributing to that donation infinitely surpasses the value of so small a gift. From me, the President and Fellows of the College will please to accept my cordial thanks for the kind attention you are pleased to honor me with, and for the greatfull sence you are pleased to entertain of the late Mr. Lopez's liberality. The condolence and kind sympathy you are

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pleased to express on acc't of his immature death brings fresh to our idea [mind] that sad catastrophe, that deprived his disconsolate widow of the best of husbands, his numerous offspring of a tender and indulgent parent, myself of a worthy son, whoes very life and soul was closely interwoved with mine, and the community in general of a usefull and valuable member of society, all whom beg leave to join with me in returning you our unfeigned thanks for your hearty condolance on the malencholy occassion.

Being desirous to complete and perfect that portrait before it's deposited, if you'll be so obliging as to let me know the cost of the frame you have bestow'd upon it, I will reimburse you that expence with pleasure by first safe hand that offers.

As it allways affords me and fam'y great pleasure in every event that can contribute to the happiness and wellfare of the Rev'd Mr. Stiles, we should be wanting in the high esteem and veneration we bare him and his worthy family was we to omit this oppert'y to felicitate him on the happy state [of remarriage] he has lately enter'd into, on which joyfull occassion Mrs. Rivera and Mrs. Lopez with both our families beg leave to unite with me in our hearty wishes that indulgent Heaven may pour down his choicest blessings on the happy pair, and that their future days may be a series of health and prosperity, which are the most ardent wishes of him who with the highest sentiments of esteem and respects beg leave to subscribe, gent'n,

Your most obedient and very h'ble serv't,
Jacob Rodr. Rivera.

To the Rev'd President and Corporation of Yale College.⁴⁸

Rivera died in Newport in February, 1789, seventy-two years of age. Unlike his son-in-law Lopez, who died insolvent, Rivera lived long enough to recoup some of his losses and died a wealthy man.

New England, 1779-1791

He was buried in the old cemetery at Newport. Years later Longfellow came to this town and meditated on the fate of the Riveras and their fellow-*Sephardim* who had tasted the "bitter herbs of exile and its fears."

How strange it seems! These Hebrews in their graves,

Close by the street of this fair seaport town,

Silent beside the never-silent waves,

At rest in all this moving up and down!

The poet may well have noticed that practically all the inscriptions were carved in two languages. As a student of the romance cultures, he was conscious of the Iberian background of many of the men whose "sepulchral stones, so old and brown . . . pave with level flags their burial place." Had he carefully examined the epitaphs of all those buried in the eighteenth century, he would have seen that there are only three that have no Hebrew, only two that have no English. One only adds the Latin, two the Spanish, and one the Portuguese. Even in death these Jews had cut themselves off from Spain and Portugal; with their last breath they realized that their future lay in the new Anglo-Saxon world.

Chapter 10

Canada: The Fourteenth Colony, 1749-1763

MOST of the business activities of Lopez and Rivera were oriented to the south and east of Newport: south, toward the British-American colonies and the West Indies; east, toward Europe and the west African coast. It is true that Lopez had agents at various times in Boston, to the north, but his business with this city did not begin to assume importance until after Yorktown, when he established a branch there in charge of his nephew, David Lopez, Jr. His relations with the colonies still farther north, especially Canada, were not extensive, although he had his correspondents in Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal. It was far more advantageous to the Canadians, if they were going to buy through intermediaries, to deal at the most accessible place. This was not Newport, for the sea and St. Lawrence river route to Quebec and Montreal was too long.

The Canadian merchants, and the Jews among them, had a more direct road to English merchandise at New York.

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The staples and supplies could be sent up the Hudson to Albany, portaged to Lake Champlain, and then taken north, on lake and river, past St. Denis to Sorel (William Henry) where the Richelieu pours into the St. Lawrence. If the carriers had not already cut over by land to Montreal, they could continue up the river to Montreal, or down the great stream to Three Rivers and Quebec.

Jews were engaged in business in all these towns; in some of them they had been settled since the conquest of Canada by the English in 1759 and 1760. Montreal, however, the commercial capital, which had a population of well under 10,000, was the only Canadian town during the colonial period that boasted an organized Jewish religious community.

It is very doubtful whether any Jews who acknowledged their creed had lived as permanent settlers in what had been New France. As early as 1683, Louis XIV had ordered the Jews out of another colony, Martinique; and in 1724, Louis XV and Bienville issued the *Code Noir* which drove the Jews—the handful that may have been there—out of Louisiana.

There was constancy in this attempt of the Bourbons to exclude all non-Catholics, but there were also exceptions, and in the course of the eighteenth century some French Jews, who had been given certain civil and economic rights, did find it possible to do business in the French West Indies, Canada, and Louisiana.

So, seeking as ever the fringe of possibility, if it promised opportunity, individual Jews of an adventurous nature did sail up the St. Lawrence. A Portuguese merchant by the

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name of Joseph DeSilva, who tarried in Montreal for a time, was very probably a Jew by origin. In the period from 1738 to 1740, a young twenty-year-old sailor, Jacques LaFargue, turned out to be Esther Brandeau, a Jewess from a small town in the vicinity of Bayonne; conversion was the unacceptable price of her remaining, and she was sent back home. In the next decade the pious French were more successful in their effort to convert one of the chosen people; a Dutch Jew was baptized on board the good ship "Rascal" ("La Friponne") on the way to Isle Royal, Cape Breton Island. When they reached Louisburg (1752) the conversion was repeated, this time in the presence of the governor of Acadia himself.

The city of Halifax, in Nova Scotia, was established by the English in 1749 and soon sheltered a number of Jewish families. The economic opportunities seemed so inviting that the Sephardic community back in London even planned to send a group of impoverished settlers to this fine port as early as 1749. But this plan, like the earlier ones of the 1730's and the 1740's, to dispatch underprivileged Jews—who were a burden to the London Jewish welfare agencies—to Georgia and to South Carolina accomplished very little if anything. In 1750 Halifax was a boom town full of army and navy purveyors, merchants, and officials, 4,000 civilians, "many Jews and one Deist." Within a year after the town was built there was a Jewish cemetery there; and the continued presence of other Jews is documented into the 1760's. This was not surprising, for Halifax was the only British port of any consequence north of New England while New France was still a French possession.

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In the other camp, there was no more vigorous, competent, and determined supporter of New France than Abraham Gradis. A native of Bordeaux, Abraham never set foot on Canadian soil. Nonetheless, his firm, David Gradis and Sons, played a unique part in trying to maintain and save the French colonial empire in North America. Gradis was a merchant-shipper, a purveyor of military and naval supplies, and a banker. His concern was almost a whole quartermaster corps in itself. Together with his father David, the real founder of the firm, Abraham had been deeply engrossed, since the 1740's, in the effort to keep New France in close commercial touch with the mother country. He frequently risked his vast personal fortune in heroic and desperate attempts to run the British blockade during the last two French and English wars. He strained every nerve to hold Canada for a France which accorded him, perhaps grudgingly, civil and economic privileges, but denied him as a Jew those rights of political equality which were granted to others of the same commercial status.

In 1748, together with a rapacious official, the *intendant* Bigot, and a third partner, he organized a corporation called La Société du Canada to further trade with that colony. Gradis, the largest stockholder, shipped food, textiles, and other consumers' goods there in exchange for raw products both from that country and from the French West Indies. It was a lucrative business, and before the company was dissolved in 1756 it netted Gradis almost a million francs. Also in 1748 he cherished the hope of founding a similar company to exploit the possibilities of French Louisiana. With a powerful commercial corporation in Canada at the north-

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ern end of the French axis, and another at the southern end, on the Gulf, the two concerns would inevitably dominate the trade of the entire Mississippi Valley.

Gradis' devotion to France was not superficial or conditioned solely by financial considerations. His family, of Portuguese descent, had been in France for almost a century, and although they had been compelled for a long time to live outwardly as Catholics, they were nonetheless staunchly patriotic. When Abraham heard on one occasion that some French ships had been captured by the English, he wrote to his friend Benjamin Mendes DaCosta, England's most distinguished Jewish philanthropist, asking him to help the prisoners and charge the bill to him. "I rely upon your friendship sufficiently," he wrote to DaCosta, "to hope that you will be good enough to render me this service. I do not know of any greater service that you can render me since I feel such great obligation toward all that body of men." Such was the man who was trying to save New France from the ineptitude and dishonesty of its officials, and from the brilliant aggression of the elder Pitt.

Gradis was worried in spite of the fact that his own firm carried on a colonial business of over 2,000,000 francs in 1758, and during the next four or five years, over 9,000,000 francs. He knew the French colonial empire was tottering. After the fall of Louisburg in 1758, he feared the worst: "For twenty months nothing has been done except to allow our marine to be destroyed. We have just lost Isle Royale, and now Canada is threatened. We have not a single warship left; they have all been captured. The price of food-

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stuffs is enormously high and it is impossible to send a single ship to the colonies."

Victory was in sight for the English in September, 1759, after Quebec surrendered. One of the men who were to distinguish themselves in the attack was Alexander Schomberg, the baptized son of an observant London Jew. Schomberg, the commander of the frigate "Diana," had already made a name for himself in the capture of Louisburg and was once more to enhance his reputation in this final act of conquest.

Schomberg liked America so much that he asked his friend Garrick, the actor, to intercede with British officialdom to secure some sort of post for him in the colonies. Garrick assented graciously, making an appeal for his friend in a poem of which the following stanzas are typical:

Make him the tyrant of a fort.
He'll ask no more of you or faith.
Surrounded by his scalping court,
What monarch would be half so great?

Send him where aft he fought and bled,
Again to cross th' Atlantic sea.
To tomahawk and wampum bred,
He's more than half a Cherokee.

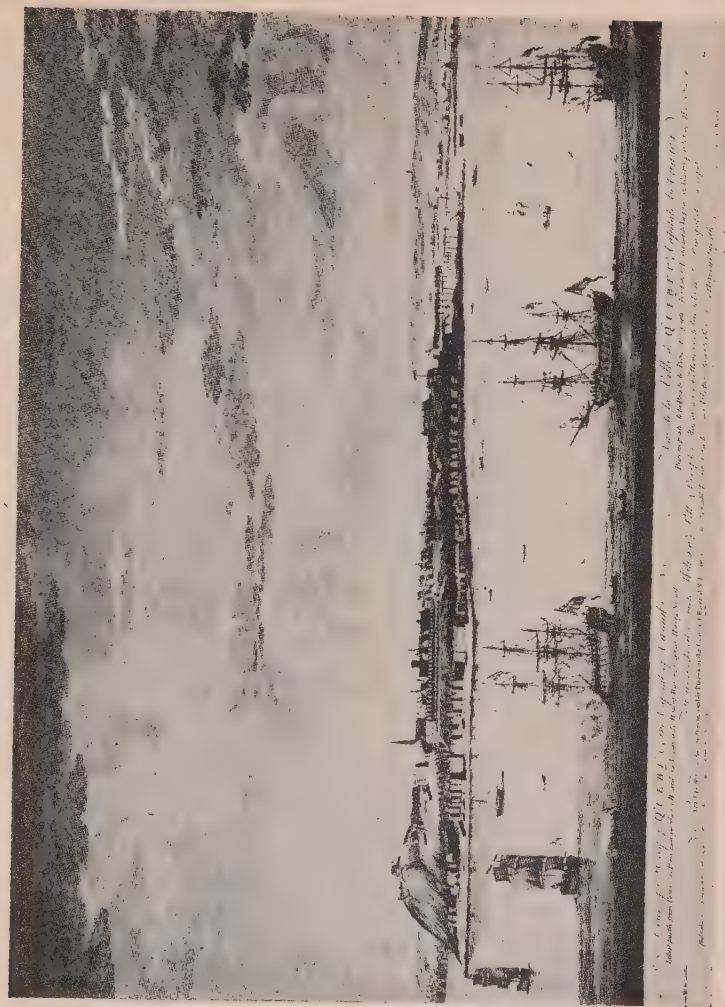
With the English at this time there had come, of course, sutlers and civilian commissary officers, among them a number of Jews. Some of those who came in with the troops did their job and departed; others stayed. Among the few who remained to be numbered with the "Pilgrim Fathers" of English Canada were Aaron Hart and Samuel Jacobs.

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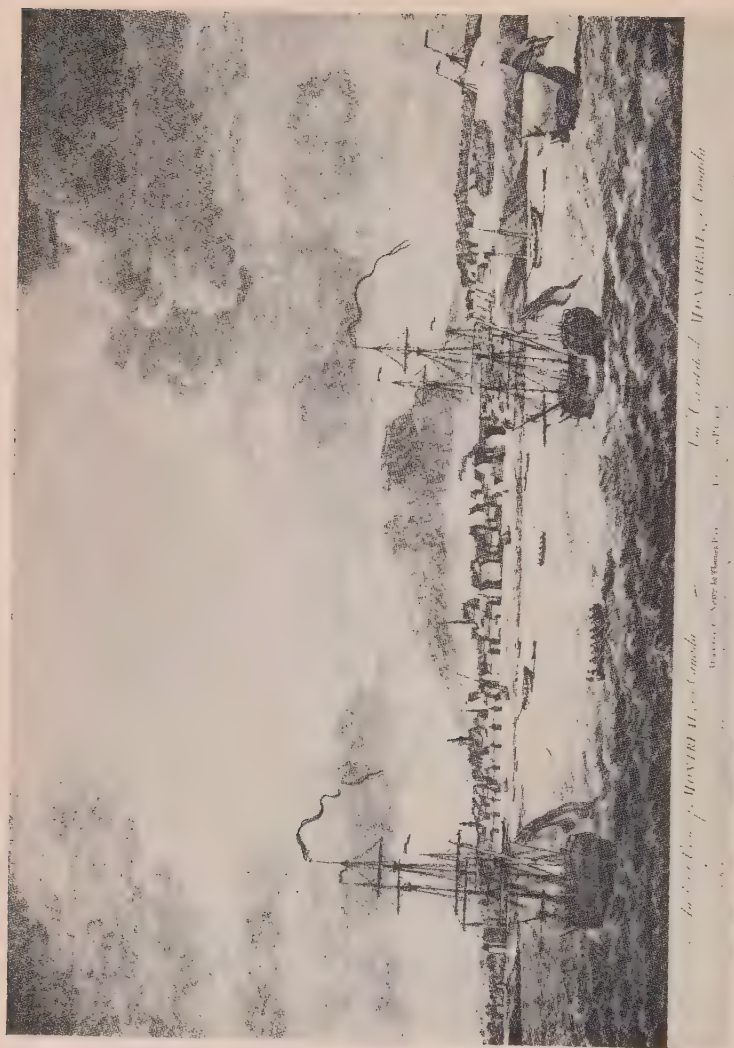
Jacobs may have come to Canada in May-June, 1759, with the English armada that sailed up the St. Lawrence for the reduction of Quebec and the end of French rule. He may have been on board his own schooner, the "Betsey," with the other ships that spread canvas that summer and headed for Quebec. He was in that city, at the very latest, about a month after its surrender. After Wolfe had died on September 13th during the successful assault on the city, General James Murray was left in command.

The following month Jacobs' schooner was at Quebec, loading up with fish for a run to Oporto and for a return load of Portuguese wine. But it never made the trip. On November 14th, before it got under way, it was requisitioned by the general to carry cattle and other supplies to Quebec from the nearby St. Lawrence island of Orleans. Murray, operating under martial law, had no hesitation in taking the boats he could find and needed, for food was scarce and the French in Montreal might return any day. As an officer and as an aristocrat he was not overly fond of the traders who had rushed in with the troops to take over the French trade.

Winter came with Jacobs still working hard at the job of ferrying food to the city; his boat was icebound until April 13th of the following year. All this cost him money, and none was coming in. Without means and credit to continue, Jacobs sold a controlling interest in the "Betsey," and when her new owners were paid for their hire, he set out to collect what was due him for the period from November, 1759, to June, 1760. Because of business which held him up in Montreal and in New York, the following



QUEBEC AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST, 1759



MONTREAL AT THE TIME OF THE CONQUEST, 1760

letter, one of the earliest evidences of a Jew under the English in the province of Quebec, was not dispatched till March, 1762:

To the Honourable James Murray, Esq'r, Governor of Quebec, etc., etc.:

The memorial of Samuel Jacobs, merchant in Quebec, humbly sheweth that, in the year 1759, your memorialist was sole owner of the schooner "Betsey," Capt. Coalman, burthen one hundred sixteen and half tons, king's tonage, laying in the river St. Charles [at Quebec], well fitted and mann'd for a voyage to Oporto with fish, and to return to this place with a cargo of the commodities of Portugal, the truth of which fully appears by the letter of recommendation herewith dated at Quebec, the 11th Oct'r, 1759, from Capt'n Thomas Martin to Mr. George Bullimore, merch't in Oporto.

Which said voyage to the great detriment of your memorialist he was prevented from putting in execution by an order from your Excellency to Lieut. Robert Paleshall, town adjutant, as appears by this certificate, herewith dated the 14th November, 1759, to employ said vessel in the service of the government to bring cattle and stores from the Island of Orleans [near Quebec].

And that said vessel in the course of the repeated turns she made was at last froze up at the said Island of Orleans and there remain'd with four men on board, maintained with bread at the extravagant price of ninepence p[er]. pound and pork at one shilling p[er]. pound—which is well known to the people in trade here—untill the 13th April, 1760, when, by your Excellency's orders, your memorialist had then, with much labour and expence got her brought from said Island and put into the dock at this garrison with her cables quite chafed, ropes cut, planks started, and seams intirely open'd by the frost during the winter, as appears by Lieut. Paleshall's certificate dated the 13th May, 1760, as also by the return dated the 14

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April, 1760, which your memorialist did himself the honor of delivering to your Excellency, setting forth that your memorialist had taken such measures as to put her in a proper condition for service in seven days.

That at the end of that time your Excellency was pleased to send for your memorialist to inform him that said vessel was still wanted in His Majesty's service. Whereupon Lieut. Chas. Stuart of 78th Regiment, then agent for transports, by your Excellency's orders directed me to get her portholes made larger as she was to be arm'd, which was immediately complied with, and your memorialist did himself receive, from Capt. Chas. Leslie's of 48th Regiment's schooner, six swivel guns and put them on board the said schooner "Betsey," so continued in the service and wholly own'd by your memorialist untill the 13th June, 1760, when, by many disappointments your memorialist had mett with, he was reduced to the necessity of selling three-fourths of said vessel to Mess'rs Algeo and Connor with the entire management of her, which said gentlemen have received certificates for the hire of her from the 14th day of the said month of June, 1760.

Therefore your memorialist must beg your Excellency will be pleased to grant him a certificate for the hire of said schooner "Betsey" from the 14th day of November, 1759, to the 13th June, 1760, both days inclusive, and to excuse the delay of applying to your Excellency for the same which is intirely owing to the situation of your memorialist's affairs being such at Montreal and New York, as required his presence there.

Relying on your Excellency's inclination and readiness to do justice, your memorialist begs leave to subscribe himself with the greatest deference and respect,

Your Excellency's most obedient and most humble servant,
Sam'l Jacobs.

Quebec, the 22'd March, 1762.⁴⁹

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In all probability he was paid, for Murray, in June, 1762, in a letter to Jeffrey Amherst, the commander of the British forces, favored his request.

Although Jacobs complained in this petition to General Murray that he was so embarrassed financially that he had to sell the "Betsey" in 1760, our sources indicate clearly that he had been actively engaged in a variety of business enterprises ever since he came to Canada in 1759. One suspects he was not so "hard up" as he claimed to be. Most of his ventures were on his own, but on particular occasions he found a partner with whom he was ready to split profits or losses, as chance might determine. As early as 1759, he was doing business with Robert Grant, a Canadian merchant, and he was also in close touch with a Jewish friend in New York, Abraham I. Abrahams, whom we have already met as the schoolteacher and popular circumciser in that century-old Jewish community.

After General Amherst occupied Crown Point, New York, in 1759, Jacobs visited the place and made an effort to develop an active branch of his business there. The following year he sold Major Elliot, the commander, a sizeable order of whisky, wine, candles, flour, loaf sugar, and molasses, to say nothing of a load of pork, delivered to the major through the courtesy of Simon Levy of Montreal. Thirteen years later Jacobs was still trying to collect this bill from the major, who was then in Europe!

The next year, 1761, Jacobs wrote from his main office in Quebec instructing one of his chief agents, Mr. Curtius, to collect a bill for port and shoes sold at Crown Point, and to keep on piling up goods at the fortress. He had hopes of

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developing a lively trade there, not only with the troops at the garrison, but also with the Indians in the neighborhood. And in the same letter, dated November 30, 1761, the Quebec merchant asked Curtius to buy up 10,000 bushels of wheat, but warned him not to seem too eager. He didn't want to force the price up, he told Curtius. Mr. Law is coming up to see you. Keep your mouth shut, tell him nothing, and if he wants to buy something, let him have it on three months' credit.

It may be, as we intimated, that Jacobs was stretching the long bow when he pleaded financial hardship to Murray, but 1761 did bring difficulties and reverses. He sent a sloop up the Richelieu with a load, but the rascal in charge stole or disposed of a barrel in the cargo. True, Jacobs was indemnified by the owner of the boat, but he was determined to have the thief flogged as an example to others.

Another loss that year—a substantial one, apparently—was the failure of Gershon Levy and Company to settle their accounts with Jacobs and Alexander Mackenzie. This company owed Jacobs and his partner over £1,400 New York currency and promised to pay when the canoes came down from the Upper Country with beaver, but when the furs finally arrived Gershon Levy consigned them to Isaac Levy of Quebec. Jacobs was furious and immediately penned a petition to Murray asking for authority to secure the goods for the debt due him.

That same year he ordered a Negro girl from New York—domestic slaves were popular because hired help was scarce. About the same time he bought a lottery ticket from Uriah Hendricks of New York: the Jewish merchants—

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canny just like all the others—were always hoping to win the grand prize!

Jacobs was also in constant touch with Montreal, where he had an agent. There was a post road between Quebec and Montreal, a weekly courier service, and the trip could be made in thirty hours. Communications with New York also were good: couriers made that journey every month and connected with the fast English boats that were constantly leaving for the continent and the West Indies.

Throughout his mercantile career of almost thirty years in Canada, Jacobs worked through his agents, who “rustled” business for him at strategic spots. One of these agents was a Jew, Mr. Aaron, who was stationed in St. Antoine on the Richelieu, across the river from St. Denis, where Jacobs now settled. It is difficult to identify this man, for we do not know his first name, but he may well be the Aaron, a partner in the firm of Hart Aaron and Jacob Cohen, who did business in 1759-1760 on Long Island, in the towns of Flushing, New Town, Jericho, Islip, and Jamaica. These two worthies may have gone out of business in 1760—they had a sale in Jamaica, Long Island, that year—and Aaron may have wandered up the Hudson and down the Richelieu looking for a job.

Jacobs hired Mr. Aaron . . . and regretted it. In that same letter to Curtius, dated November 30, 1761, Jacobs wrote: “As for that fellow I sent you up, as I believe he is of no service to you, send him to Montreal. There he [w]ill find some Jews that will be more agreeable to him. By all means I would have you send him.” The letter to Curtius was brought in by the new man who was to take

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Aaron's place. This new fellow, so Jacobs warned Curtius, was not experienced. He couldn't buy or sell anything on his own initiative. Use him to look after the place when you go out on a buying expedition. It was this same bearer, probably, who carried the letter giving Mr. Aaron his walking papers.

Quebec, 30th Nov'r, 1761.

Mr. Aaron,
Sir:

It is my desire on the rec't of this letter you [w]ill leave my house at St. Anthuene. You have been at a good expence to me and of no service, therefore you ill try if you can be of any to yourself, and prepare to Montreal where you ill let each of our [Jewish] brethren take an equal trouble with you as I have done. For had you staid much longer in [New] York, you would tire out your friends there, which was but few.

Let my advice still be to you, not to aim at merchandize to raise yourself by, at the present, but go into some honest house and work for your victuals, and if you get nothing too aforehand, you ill still keep yourself out of trouble and be an honest man.

Ingenuity will shine in a man even if he is carrying a log of wood, therefore let the man you are with find out your ingenuity by merit and not by them horn buttons you have brought with you, which are not worth five pence, and you have exposed me with them, both here and there, if it had been in your power.

Therefore I have no more to say to you, and you ill be careful not to take anything in my name any where for yourself, or go to any of my houses either at Montreal, here, or any where else where I have any intrust. Or else I shall bring you in trouble. Therefore endeavour for an honest livelihood and [I] may be your friend when deserving.

S. J.⁵⁰

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Aaron—if it is our New York man—drifted up the Richelieu and down the Hudson back to New York, and by 1770 he was appointed *shohet* for the Jewish community. This kind of communal job was frequently the last resort of the incompetent. The *shohet* Aaron was incompetent, or a fool, or worse, for about half a year later he was suspended from office. This sounds suspiciously like our luckless wight—*shlemiel*, if you prefer.

That same busy month of November, when Jacobs was scurrying about buying and selling, hiring and firing, he was also showering letters on Aaron Hart. Let there be no confusion: Aaron Hart was not Hart Aaron. By common consent Aaron Hart was deemed the richest Jew in Canada. In October, the month before, Jacobs had sent 300 pairs of mittens to Hart at Three Rivers. The mittens had come from an Eleazar Levy and had been dispatched up the St. Lawrence in a “battoe.” They cost 18d. a pair, and Jacobs offered them to Hart at cost price. He wasn’t going to make any money on his friend but . . . how about a little business my way? Apparently an order did come in, for two weeks later, in November, Jacobs sent 500 barrels of flour to Hart and his partner for this deal, Alexander Mackenzie, and promised also to send up some white wine if he could lay his hands on it. Jacobs himself was also “concerned” with Mackenzie that year.

It was rather obvious that Jacobs was very eager to please the “seigneur” from Three Rivers. Three days after he had sent the flour he wrote to Hart that there was a load of goods sent by Hyam Mears (Myers) of New York, waiting for Hart on the Quebec docks, and Jacobs would

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be delighted to forward it, but unfortunately there was no bill of lading. Six days later he wrote Hart again:

Three Rivers, Aaron Hart, Quebec, 14th Nov'r, 1761.
Sir:

I received a letter from Mr. Hyam Mears in regard of some goods you have on board, but as I had no directions nor the bill of lading, can do nothing in it. But if my person[al] storage [is needed] or any thing else in which I can be of service to you, please to command me freely.

What would you think of 100 barrels flour your way, either on your own account or else I will take the pleasure to be concerned with you in it.

I hope by this time you have received the mittins. This is all that occurs.

From y'r friend and broth'r and h'ble serv't,
S. J.⁵¹

Note the suggestion about another hundred barrels of flour. Hart could buy this lot outright or the two could go halves. Evidently Jacobs figured that if Hart and Mackenzie could sell 500 barrels, Hart and Jacobs might well dispose of an extra hundred to their mutual advantage. It seemed like a good idea.

When Aaron Hart was described above as "the seigneur from Three Rivers" that phrase was not intended as a jocular description. He was a landowner of feudal proportions, and if we may accept the family tradition on this score, he was a seigneur seven times over. We do know that before he died he owned or controlled the seigneuries of Bécancour and Sainte-Marguerite, and the fief of the Marquisat du Sablé.

Sometime about the year 1752, this young Bavarian, still

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in his twenties, had come to New York by way of Jamaica. So family history relates. Strangely, there is no trace of him in the records of the New York Jewish congregation for this period. However, he does appear in 1760, when his presence is documented by a Masonic certificate, testifying that he was a member in good standing of the "worshipfull Trinity lodge No. 4." Evidently he either had just become an initiate, or had asked for a copy of his membership record because he was about to travel north with the English troops under Amherst and Haldimand moving against Montreal. It is said that he was a commissary officer, whatever that may mean; he was, more probably, some sort of civilian supplyman, or simple sutler, and, if we may judge by his later career, a very competent one. Obviously, from all that we know and may infer about him, he was a person of charm, energy, and unusual capacity, who won an important place for himself in the hierarchy of Canadian merchants.

It is quite probable that Hart's success is to be ascribed not merely to his native ability, but also to his influence and friendship with Col. Haldimand, who by 1762 was in command at Three Rivers, where Hart lived till his death in the year 1800. He had good friends in the army and a wide acquaintance in the commercial world. The people who knew him respected him; despite his seigneurial opportunities, his life was free of scandal. He observed the precepts of his ancestral faith as far as this was possible with only two or three Jewish families in the midst of a non-Jewish community, and made heroic and successful efforts to rear his children as faithful Jews.

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Hart had no political ambitions. In spite of the fact that he was a large landowner, he had no desire to play the role of an English gentleman or to ape the French seigneurs. He had no illusions with respect to the attitude of his neighbors toward Jews. He wanted to be a successful merchant, nothing more. Three Rivers owed a great deal to him, for he was its most enterprising citizen.

By 1761, as we saw, Samuel Jacobs of Quebec was in touch with this "seigneur." Hart was always willing to do what he could to help Jacobs even, as he wrote, if he had to neglect his own business to do so, and he meant what he said. The Nugent affair was a case in point.

Nugent was a merchant—probably of Three Rivers or the adjacent area—who owed Jacobs money. The latter heard through the grapevine that Nugent was near failure and might abscond. Accordingly, he asked Hart to keep an eye on the prospective bankrupt. It was sometime later that Hart wrote Jacobs and warned him that Nugent—Newgon he called him—had gone to Crown Point, where, Hart implied, he was preparing to leave his creditors in the lurch. He was right. Nugent failed, and Hart, as one of the men authorized to liquidate Nugent's assets, did what he could to salvage something for his Quebec coreligionist. A large auction, a *vendue*, was held, and there was realized a considerable sum which was applied toward satisfying the creditors. Later on more money would be expected to come in, for the Indians who had been outfitted on credit would bring in their furs in repayment of their debts.

Apparently Hart had his hands full in 1763 taking care of Jacobs' problems. Hart urged that Jacobs come up and

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attend to affairs. But Jacobs was in no hurry; maybe he had more pressing problems in this last year of the French and Indian War and the first of Pontiac's uprising.

Mr. Sam'l Jacobs,

Ser:

I wrote you per last post butt rec'd no ansver. I beg you ansver: wath is to be done with your goods hear, as I think thay are note safe in the store thay are in. By the next post shall send you the state of Newgon's affairs, and am, ser,

Your most hum'e ser't,

Aaron Hart.

I beg you will leat me no if you rec'd the letter I sent by Cap't Rogirs. The hoil wendue [whole vendue] am'd to about £290;6337, 6, $\frac{3}{4}$ French leviris.⁵²

Mr. Sam'l Jacobs,

Sir:

It is reported hear that Mr. Newgon is gon to Crown Pint. Some people think he will not come agin to this place. I leve it to you to no if he had any bisnes at Crown Pint. He went from this place the 14th in[stant].

From, sir,

Your most hum'e ser't,

Aaron Hart.

Trois Revieres, Aug't 25th, 1763.

Pleas to taik no nothes of this to [any]body, as I mean to serve you.⁵³

Dear Jacobs,

S'r:

I am sorry to aquanit you of the disagreeable news that the rats have eaton most of your calleccos and cadiz [serge] and some other goods in the store thay was in.

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On finding them so eaten I removed them all I could to my garret. As I naver hade goods thair and do note no [do not know] butt rets may be thair, beg you will soon taik thame away. Your ginger bread, tobacco, and fige blanc [blanc-mange], and frying pans ar still in the store house for which you pay one doller per month.

I hove lang expectked you wold send for them and beg it will be soon, and am s'r,

Your most hum'e ser.,
Aaron Hart.

Trois Revires, New'r 23th, 1763.⁵⁴

While Hart was keeping an eye on Nugent and worrying about Jacobs' goods, his dear friend Eleazar Levy was involved in a problem. Levy was a well-known merchant who carried on an extensive business in Quebec, New York, and, later, Philadelphia. He had come to Quebec in 1760, and no doubt had worked closely with Hart in supplying and feeding the British troops. The friendship that had developed was never broken, and almost to the day of Aaron's death, forty years later, Eleazar played the part of a mentor, watching over the interests of Hart and his family in the States.

The frequent and unforeseeable hazards that faced every trader in a pioneer land just emerging from war are clearly portrayed in a miscarriage of justice which Levy experienced in 1763. As an honorable businessman he was appointed by the trustees of a bankrupt to handle the estate and make proper payments to the creditors as the assets were liquidated. One of the creditors, an army officer, demanded treatment as a preferred creditor, and despite the fact that he had no right to make this demand, he appealed

to his cronies in the Military Council at Montreal to help him. The city being under martial law, they were not only willing but able to do so. They issued an order for payment, even though Levy did not as yet have any funds of the bankrupt in his possession. They then entered Levy's store, seized his wares, and sold a part of them. The remainder, stored in the military provost marshal's office, was later destroyed by fire.

After civil law was introduced into the province in the fall of 1764, Levy appealed his case to the civil courts, won it, but was compelled by the chicanery of the military to carry it finally to King and Council. After eleven years of litigation, even after a verdict had been rendered in his favor by the Crown, after the expense of hiring competent counsel and of making two trips to London, he still had not been able to collect a single penny. All in all, his loss on this suit must have amounted to at least £1,500. It was a bitter and costly pill to swallow.

Chapter 11

Canada: The Fourteenth Colony, 1763-1775

THE relationships between Levy and Hart, and between Hart and Jacobs, and in general the attitudes of the merchants to one another, were not as peaceful as one might think. The obvious and logical fact was that all businessmen in a frontier civilization were very dependent on one another, particularly so the Jews. They were few in number, were frequently linked through marriage, had common problems and a common "guild" spirit, and, consequently, had no obvious choice but to hang together and help one another. This was true, but only to a limited extent.

Business rivalries and personal affronts, real or imagined, tended to magnify and make bitter the difficulties in personal relations. The result was that quarreling was common, litigation frequent, and mutual hatreds were quick to flare up, even among the dozen or more Jewish merchants.

In the above letter to Hart, dated November 14, 1761, Jacobs courteously and graciously informed Hart at Three

Rivers that Myers had dispatched a shipment for Hart to Quebec, but he, Jacobs, would be glad to store it in his own warehouse, and he closed his letter with the affectionate phrase: "From your friend and brother and humble servant." What could be sweeter? Yet in the very letter which Myers had written from New York in September, asking Jacobs to keep an eye on Hart's load, he asked Jacobs to do this as a courtesy to him for he knew full well that Jacobs had no use for Hart!

Myers was a New Yorker who finally found it worth his while to move to Canada, where he remained for about twenty years. He had begun his business career in New York in 1750 as a *shohet* and butcher. We have written before that the job of slaughtering cattle for the Jewish community was the last resort of the incompetent; it was equally true—and for the same underlying reason—that it was the first resort of the impoverished. It is clear, therefore, that Myers began at the bottom, the very bottom. But he was not so poor that he could not afford to marry the following year. His job as *shohet* paid him £10 a year—with the tongues thrown in—and his employers, Shearith Israel, were kind enough to pay his ferriage to the slaughterhouse across the river. By 1759 he felt strong enough to stand on his own feet. He took the naturalization oath that year, went into business for himself, and by 1761 was carrying on an active trade with the Jewish merchants of recently occupied Canada.

A study of his correspondence for the next two years not only demonstrates the routine of the typical merchant, but documents the high degree of risk inherent in his busi-

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ness, and the consequent ill fortune which sooner or later dogged the heels of almost every colonial enterpriser.

New York, Sept'r 27th, 1761.

Mr. Sam'll Jacobs,

S'r:

I take this opportunity to inform you that have shipp'd you on board a schooner bound to Quebeck, which will sail in a day or two, your Negro girl, seal, and blank paper.

I rec'd your letter p'r Taylor, but he will neither take charge of the girl nor horse. As to the latter, is really not worth sending, so shall sell him for the most I can or he'll eat himself up. Likewise I have not rec'd any money on your orders yet.

Have also shipp'd on board the above schooner 16 tierces rice, 5 or 6 bbls. shrub [fruit juice beverage], a large box containing 250 pr. skeats, coffee mills, and buttons on my own account which hope you'll dispose of to the best advantage.

If Mr. Aaron Hart shou'd not be at Quebeck when this vessel arrives, beg you'll be good enough to take charge of his goods till you send an express to acquaint him thereof. Wou'd not troubl'd you as I know you are on no good terms, only desire it for my sake.

By the said schooner shall write you more particular, till then, am, s'r,

Your friend and hum'le ser't,
Hyam Myers.

N. B. If there is any likelihood of business to be done this winter with dry goods or any other beg you'll let me know by the earliest opportunity.⁵⁵

The Taylor mentioned was the clerk of a Mr. Levy, and since there were four merchants named Levy in Canada at this time, we do not know which Levy it was.

Another letter, dated the next day, gives the name of the

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Negro girl as Jenny, and her cost was £65. The schooner was the "William and Mary." The captain, this letter said, was a Mr. Simonton, who had been instructed to take good care of Jenny. Settle with him for her passage, and don't forget you owe me for two blankets which I gave her. I hope she arrives in good health. Taylor is also bringing up the seal and blank paper you ordered. Oh, yes, your horse. Taylor didn't want to be bothered with him either (evidently Taylor was fussy); the horse wasn't much good, to tell the truth, so I sold him for £8, which I now owe you. Incidentally, how about remitting me something on what you owe me?

These letters, sent out from New York on the 27th and 28th of September, reached Jacobs at Quebec the first week of November. It took about five weeks.

In an October note to Myers, Jacobs enclosed three drafts on three English army officers who owed him a considerable sum of money for goods supplied, but who were now being transferred out of the country without settling their accounts. If, Myers answered, the drafts had only arrived four days sooner, they could have been presented; but the officers are gone, two of them to Barbados, and one across the river. I have "good correspondence" in Barbados, Myers added consolingly; we'll find them. The next spring, in March, 1762, Myers wrote back again that the officers, alas, did not stop at Barbados, and as for that man across the river—in the Jerseys?—he's dead and I can't do anything because you failed to give me your power of attorney. Three months later, in June, the thread was again picked up: one of the two officers who were sup-

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posed to touch at the West Indies can't be located, and the other is now dead. But we'll try to get the money out of the estate! In the meantime no money, and these bills were at least three years old. Sufferer: Samuel Jacobs.

Myers was working hard all this time to help Jacobs, but even friends were bound to fall out where bills of exchange, drafts, and collection of debts were concerned. In the fall of this year the two friends quarreled over the payment of a certain draft, but finally agreed to submit their differences to an arbitration committee of three. The committee, all three Gentiles, found for Jacobs. Sufferer: Hyam Myers.

In spite of this adverse decision Myers continued to do business with Jacobs. More and more Myers' interests were concentrated on Canada, and he began to travel, almost regularly, between Quebec, Montreal, and New York. On these trips he usually took the short cut up the Hudson rather than go around by boat and up the St. Lawrence. One of the advantages of taking the Lake Champlain route was that he could always stop at Crown Point, where he, like Jacobs and Gershon Levy, had commercial interests.

Myers was often away from his family for months at a time. In March, 1762, he was in Montreal. But by June he was back home again, just in time to sit around and await the birth of his son Jacob, who was born and circumcised the following month. Possibly in order to commemorate this joyful event, he sent a gift of 100 pounds of wax for candles to the new synagogue which was just being built in Newport. Such generosity, together with his long and active career in the congregation, testifies to his loyalty and devotion to the Jewish community. The gift indicated that

three years after he gave up his modest congregational job he was already a successful merchant.

The next year he was back in Montreal, but this time he brought up his family with him and settled them in Quebec. Evidently Mrs. Myers did not care for an absentee husband; obviously Hyam was eager to see more of his son. What was more compelling, no doubt, the importance of his Canadian affairs and the rapid economic growth of Montreal and Quebec justified the transfer of his headquarters from New York to Quebec. But the latter city did not bring full happiness to the again pregnant Mrs. Myers, as the following statement of her husband, published in the *Quebec Gazette*, most eloquently demonstrates.

To the Public:

Whereas it has been industrially reported, by some ill-minded persons, that Mrs. Susanna Furth of Quebec, mid-wife, was blameable and unskilful in her profession, especially in laying the wife of me the subscriber, whereby the child was dead born: This is therefore to acquaint the public that when the said Mrs. Furth found that my wife had not her labouring pains as usual, she desired the assistance of a doctor, and in every other respect behaved herself as a skilful person, and gave great satisfaction to every one present; nor was the least blamable, but on the contrary it is verily believed that she was the means of saving the life of the mother.

And I do declare that on any like occasion I would employ her again and recommend her to my friends.

Hyam Myers.

Quebec, 10th December, 1767.⁵⁶

As far as the traditions go and the written records indicate, Hyam Myers was not a member of the Montreal con-

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gregation. He very probably retained his membership in the synagogue at New York, to which he ultimately returned some time after the close of the American revolution.

It is strange, however, that the name of Aaron Hart of Three Rivers does not occur in the extant minutes of Shearith Israel of Montreal. His cousins and "in-laws," the Judahs, were members, but he apparently was not, doubtless for some personal reason now unknown. On the other hand, it was natural that a man like Samuel Jacobs was not a member. He had married a Gentile; he was sending his children to a Catholic school; and he was patently determined to rear them as Christians, not as Jews. Then, too, there was the example of Ezekiel Solomons. An immigrant from Berlin, whose sister was to become the wife of Aaron Hart's brother, Solomons had married a French-Canadian girl, a Protestant, and their children were all baptized. Solomons, however, was an active member of the Montreal synagogue, and when one of his baptized, uncircumcised sons died, he asked for the privilege of burial in the Jewish cemetery. His friends in the synagogue knew that the Jewish law forbade this—he certainly knew it himself—but they assented, and then immediately and unanimously passed a resolution that in the future no man or boy should be buried according to the rules and customs of the Jews unless he had already been circumcised. After having expressed themselves so unequivocally for the record, they proceeded, the very next month, to elect the father a member of the congregational executive committee of three.

As a matter of fact, the other members found it very

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hard, in spite of their religious scruples, to refuse that little plot of ground to Solomons as his dead lay before him. At least two of the members of the small congregation had been his business partners for many years, and, for all we know, still were.

Of the original five members of that firm, four had gone through the horrors of the Pontiac uprising and had shared the common experience of an Indian captivity with its imminent threat of death by torture. In all probability Ezekiel Solomons, Benjamin Lyon, Chapman Abraham, Levy Solomons, and Gershon Levy had come to Canada together. A consortium of army purveyors, they had their own limited resources, some financial supporters back in England, and possibly the help of Hayman Levy of New York, who may have been associated with them in business.

With one uncertain exception, these names are not found in the records of the American Jewish communities prior to the conquest of Canada. These men probably came directly from England with the troops themselves and may well have learned their trade as supplymen in the armies of Europe. Quartermaster work was a common Jewish occupation on the Continent in the eighteenth century; it was the royal road to wealth. After the conquest of Canada the partners stuck together and, like many of the Gentile purveyors, branched out into the lucrative fur trade, which offered the greatest opportunities after the fall of Montreal in September, 1760. The friends and relatives back in London who had sent them supplies for the soldiers could just as well finance them in the Indian trade and help them ar-

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range for the sale of the beaver which was sent to the English market in exchange.

The partners divided up the territory among themselves. One would go to Niagara, another to Presque Isle, one to Sandusky, one to Detroit, and another to Mackinac. All these posts were strategically located, lying on important rivers or commanding the routes from one lake to another. They were the points to which the Indians resorted from hundreds of miles, bringing their furs and their thirst for the white man's fire water. Ezekiel Solomons, for instance, concentrated his efforts on the Mackinac territory. He may already have been there with a load of sundries as early as 1760, before the English took over the post from the French. Indeed, he may well have been among those traders who were saved from a serious Indian threat only by the timely arrival of the English occupation detachment in 1761. He was the first Jewish settler in what is today the state of Michigan.

What did Solomons bring up with him from Montreal and Quebec? From an invoice of a later expedition we are in a position to know in detail the nature of his cargo. On this particular trip he came up with two "canoes." There were sixteen French Canadians in his crew; he was the only literate man in the crowd. Twenty-eight bales of dry goods were paddled up this time: blankets, cotton goods, linens, and the like; 2 sacks of flour; 4 bales and 1 "role" of tobacco; 4 boxes of iron ware containing brass and copper kettles, and, no doubt, an assortment of knives, needles, axes, etc.; 24 Indian guns, 600 pounds of gunpowder, and 1,000 pounds of shot and ball. So much for the solids. In

addition, there were 256 gallons of rum and brandy, mostly rum—brandy, of French provenance, was usually more expensive—and 64 gallons of wine. The whole cargo, an eighteen months' supply of "sundry goods," was valued at £750.

Before the men who took this load west to Mackinac set forth, all seventeen were called in by an officer of the crown and asked to take an oath of loyalty to King George and to promise most solemnly that they would engage in no political intrigue with the Indians. Solomons, the seventeenth man, was also required to post bond of almost double the value of his wares as assurance that he would scrupulously observe all prohibitions governing relations with the Indian natives.

This rigid supervision of the Indian trade by the imperial authorities after 1763 was in part a justified reaction to the abuses of individual traders who had taken advantage of the rather naive savages. In its larger sense the detailed control of the fur trade by the imperial authorities was part of the new colonial policy to integrate governmental activities in all North America, to tie the colonies closer to the mother country both commercially and administratively, and to compel the American provinces to accept a fair share of the financial burdens incurred on their behalf. It marked the end of the policy of "salutary neglect."

This tightening up, this surveillance of the fur trade was occasioned in part, but only in part, by the general Indian uprising popularly known as Pontiac's conspiracy. Most of the Indian leaders realized that, once the English settlers began pouring across the Alleghenies, hunting and trapping would be threatened and the Indians themselves would have

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to move out. It was this fear, together with their hatred of the English officials, their fury against the traders who cheated them, and the incitement of the bitter native French, that aroused the Indians in massed numbers to make a desperate attempt to drive the white man back across the mountains.

The concerted attacks began in May and June, 1763. The members of our Jewish consortium, unprepared for this frontier tragedy, were scattered in the various trading areas. Ezekiel Solomons was at Mackinac. There, on June 4th, Indians pretending to be engrossed only in a game of ball secured access to the fort, grabbed the weapons which their squaws had hidden under their garments, and massacred the garrison. Solomons had time to escape, but the very Frenchman who sheltered him in a garret did not hesitate to take his furs. The Indians looted his bartering stocks, and shortly after discovered his hiding place and took him prisoner. He was later ransomed.

Our further data are in part uncertain. Two Levys appear to have been seized by the Indians that same summer. One, we know, was Levy Andrew Levy of Lancaster, who was captured probably by Wyandottes, after he left Presque Isle under safe conduct for Fort Pitt. The other Levy may well have been one of the consortium, Gershon Levy. Levy Solomons, still another partner, escaped from the Indians and reached the safety of Detroit. Two other Jews, whoever they were, coming from Sandusky, fell into the hands of the savages.

A man named Chapman, who had brought up a bateau from Albany, was captured with his cargo on the Detroit

River. It is not improbable that this Chapman is to be identified with another member of the firm who is recorded as having been seized by the Indians on May 12, 1763, and was finally exchanged by them for a Potawatomi chieftain exactly two months later. His full name was Chapman Abrahams, Abarhams, Abraham, or Abram. This may have been Chapman's second capture by the Indians.

In November, 1759, General Amherst sent a scouting party from Crown Point into Canada to establish communications with General Wolfe, then closing in on Quebec. It was expected that bribery would allay the enmity of any Indians encountered, and that the Indians would lead them to Wolfe. Indians did appear, but their hostility made them immune to persuasion, and the entire party was taken prisoner. In the party was a man named Abraham. Whether Chapman, Chapman Abraham, and the unidentified Abraham were one and the same man is yet to be determined.

An account, somewhat at variance with the story of the above capture in May, 1763, is said to have been confirmed in later years by Chapman himself: he was taken on the Detroit by the Chippewas but was spirited away by a friendly Frenchman until betrayed later, by a false friend, into the hands of the Indians again. This time they were going to make short shrift of him; they tied him to a stake and set fire to the twigs about him. As the heat became intolerable he called out for something to drink. The liquid handed him scalded his tongue; he threw it into the faces of his tormentors. They were so stunned by his boldness that they pronounced him mad, untied his bonds, and set

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him at liberty. Stephen Vincent Benét used this incident in his story of a Jewish fur trader, *Jacob and the Indians*.

The four partners who had been captured by the Indians in 1763 all came out alive, apparently none the worse for what must have been a nerve-racking experience. One might well be led to think that they would speedily make good their financial losses and continue their wonted traffic. Everything seemed to be in their favor. Canada was undergoing an economic upsurge. English immigrants were coming to the country in large numbers, and the fur trade, now in the hands of the newcomers, was flourishing. Dozens of ships cleared from the docks of Quebec and Montreal for England, the North American colonies, the West Indies, the Madeiras, for Spain, and for France. Canada was growing, the west was slowly coming to life, and these Jewish merchants played no insignificant part in this pioneer movement. That at least ten per cent of the Montreal merchants in the 1760's were Jews is a conservative estimate.

Yet in the spring of 1768 the consortium was bankrupt. Its members declared that their losses amounted to £18,000, and we may well believe them. At best the fur trade was a hazardous industry. Most of the "Indian goods" had to be transported all the way from London to the warehouses on the St. Lawrence. Marine insurance was expensive and not always easy to secure. Once the trade supplies arrived, the canoes were loaded and sent to the Upper Country, risking the dangers of pioneer travel, rivers, rapids, and difficult portages. Frequently the Indians had to be carried on the backs for a season or two before the furs came in. Then came the arduous task of carrying the skins back to

settlements, and of transporting them to the European market. It was not unusual for a merchant in England to wait two, if not three years, for the arrival of the bale of furs which was to compensate him for his advances, and even after it arrived he was never sure that the public wanted his furs or that they could afford his luxury product at that particular time. Added to these normal difficulties was the looting, in 1763, of the merchants' stocks. Outstanding debts owed by Indians for preceding seasons were hardly collectable. The war ravaged the frontier for over a year, and it was not until July, 1766, that a peace treaty was finally signed between the English and the Indians.

Competition with the traders and merchants from New York and Pennsylvania was keen. For instance, the Franks-Simon-Gratz combination, working out of Philadelphia and Lancaster, penetrated the Ohio and Mississippi River basins as far west as the Illinois country, and ran athwart the Canadian fur packs moving north toward the forts and posts on the Great Lakes. The Americans to the south were free of tax; the tax on the Canadians of three per cent on goods imported and three per cent on furs exported was not removed till 1769. When, finally, trade licenses were reissued for the Canadian fur traders, and the traffic was resumed, the restrictions imposed were severe. Thus it was that for about four years the Montreal and Quebec merchants could not carry on their fur business in a normal fashion . . . and their creditors, desperate too, no doubt, were clamoring for payment with threats of suit and imprisonment for debt.

The Pennsylvania traders to the south—a number of

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whom were Jews—had also been hard hit by the Pontiac uprising, but hoped for compensation through a land grant. The Montreal partners, as far as we know, never even dreamt of relief in that form. They had no friends at court, as did the Frankeses of London.

They were not men of wealth—their one concern, literally, was to stay out of jail. They offered to make a settlement, surrendering all their property, and most of the creditors were willing even though the assets would not have yielded more than seven shillings in the pound. However, when other creditors would entertain no thought of such an arrangement, the debtors, on the advice of Attorney General Francis Maseres, presented a joint petition to Governor Carleton asking for the privilege of some sort of financial arrangement, or for the appointment of a commission of bankruptcy which would be authorized to divide the remaining assets equally among the creditors.

They did not want to expose themselves to the danger of court action by individual creditors and of imprisonment for debt. Once they were jailed, their hopes of making a living for their families and getting back on their feet would have been slim indeed. Isaac Levy, one of the creditors, whom the firm owed £1,000, joined in their memorial.

The memorial of Isaac Levi of Quebec, merchant, and Levi Solomons, Benjamin Lyon, Gershon Levi, Ezekiel Solomons, and Chapman Abraham of Quebec, late merchants and copartners, to the Honourable Guy Carleton, Esquire, Lieutenant-Governor and Commander in Chief of the province of Quebec, and [to] the Honourable Council of said province, humbly sheweth unto your Excellency and Honours:

That your petitioners Levi Solomons, Benjamin Lyon, Gershon Levi, Ezekiel Solomons, and Chapman Abraham were for many years together merchants and copartners in trade in North America, and more especially during the time of the late war with France and the subsequent [Pontiac] Indian War in the year 1763,

And that they were employed during part of the time of the said wars to furnish divers necessities to his Majesty's armies in North America, in which employment they behaved with diligence and honesty and gave general satisfaction to the commanders and other officers of his Majesty's armies aforesaid, as is well known and may be easily proved to the satisfaction of your Excellency and Honours by divers respectable persons now in this province;

And that during the aforesaid Indian War four of your five petitioners last mentioned were made prisoners by the Indians near the forts of Detroit and Michalimakinac and despoiled by them at the same time of a great quantity of goods, which they were carrying to the said forts, of the value of eighteen thousand pounds of lawful money of this province;

And that by this and other unavoidable losses and misfortunes in the said war, no ways owing to any misconduct in your petitioners, your petitioners became utterly unable to pay their creditors the full amount of their just debts;

And further that your said last mentioned petitioners having preserved another considerable part of their effects were and still are earnestly desirous of surrendering the same into the hands of proper persons for the general satisfaction of all their creditors, in proportion to their several just debts and demands, without any undue preference of some of their said creditors above the rest, in making which surrender they conceive they should act both according to the rules of equity and good conscience, and according to the true intent and meaning of the last clause of a certain ordinance of this province dated on the ninth day of March in the year of Christ, 1765;

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And that they were at the same time in hopes of obtaining from their creditors a release and discharge from the said debts, after they should have given them all the satisfaction in their power by making the said general surrender, and that they should afterwards by such reasonable indulgence of their said creditors have been at liberty to exercise their industry in some new pursuit in order to gain a livelihood. . . .

And for these and other reasons, which may occur to your Excellency and Honours in this behalf, your memorialists humbly hope that your Excellency and Honours will be graciously pleased to pass a particular ordinance, in the nature of a private act of Parliament, directing, that for the settling of the affairs of the said bankrupts, a commission of bankruptcy shall be passed under the public seal of the province, by his Excellency the Lieutenant Governor, as keeper of the public seal thereof, to such three or more wise, honest, and discreet persons as his Excellency shall think fit to appoint, to execute the law and statutes of England relating to bankrupts with respect to the said bankrupts, your memorialists. Or if this method of relieving your memorialists doth not seem expedient to this Honourable Board, to give such other relief to your memorialists touching the premisses, as to your Excellency and Honours shall seem meet.

And your memorialists, as in duty bound, shall ever pray for the wellfare of your Excellency and Honours.

Isaac Levy.

Levy Solomons, Benjemen Lyons, Gershon Levy, Ezekiel Solomons, Chapmon Abarhams.⁵⁷

Evidently their petition was not without effect: there is no record that they were confined for debt. On the contrary, we meet them again in the next decade as active, if not successful, merchants. They evidently had the per-

severance and the moral courage to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by a perverse fate.

The five men who made up this fur company were fighting for survival as late as 1770. Though still out of jail, they were not out of debt, for they had not succeeded in collecting enough money from those indebted to them to satisfy their creditors. The details of their financial difficulties are not known; we are not even certain of the name of the partnership—if it had one. It may have been Levy, Solomons and Company, for on July 19, 1764, the *Quebec Gazette* carried a notice to the public that “on the 10th of August next will be sold a large quantity of furs, consisting of beavers, otters, martins, racoons, foxes, bear skins, deer leather, and sundry other peltries, for the benefit of the creditors of Levy, Solomons and Company.” The notice was posted by Welles and Wade, trustees of the said estate; the sale was to take place in Montreal. Some years later (1769) Chapman Abrahams was still trying to collect some debts in order to satisfy one of his creditors, the well-known Detroit merchant, William Edgar.

Benjamin Lyon was in all probability the one member of the firm who had managed to escape capture by the Indians at the time of the uprising in 1763. If, as we suspect, he was the Lyon who managed to escape massacre by Montcalm's redskin allies at Fort William Henry in 1757, then he was indeed a fortunate fellow. Lyon was long active in the Canadian Jewish community. In 1779 he made a contribution for a Scroll of the Law which was purchased in London and brought out to the colony under the care

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of one of the members of a pioneer Canadian Jewish family, Joseph Pines.

Lyon, too, was a correspondent for Aaron Lopez of Newport. Early in 1770 he sent a letter to this distinguished merchant-shipper by the hand of Hyam Myers, who was making a trip south and intended to stop off in Rhode Island and see Lopez personally.

It is patent that Lyon and his friends were attempting to supplant Isaac Werden, another Canadian. Werden was a general merchant who was prepared to handle almost anything: Madeira wine—for cash, short credit, or good wheat—genteel sword knots, chocolate, white and yellow beeswax, almonds, peachstone kernels, and spermaceti candles. At this particular time Werden was buying furs for Lopez, apparently not to the satisfaction of Lyon, who wrote confidentially to Lopez, warning him of the incompetence of the man and suggesting certain new business arrangements. Werden may not have been so incompetent as Lyon insinuates, for Lopez continued to do business with him when he moved to the West Indies. Lyon was more probably “plugging” for his friend Levy Solomons.

Montreal, February 26th, 1770.

Sir:

I should have wrote you before now had I not expected to see you myself, but affairs not turning out as I expected I must have recourse to the pen.

I carefully sent your letter to Isaac Werden by post, but neither I nor Levy Salomons ever received any instructions about the contents, but found out since the quantity of beaver certainly haveing been ship'd for you, which, if not turn'd

out to your satisfaction, neither I or Levy Salomons can be blam'd for it.

I am also sorry to acquaint you that I am crediteably inform'd that Mr. Werden has purchased on your account between seven and nine hundred pounds of beaver wool at 3/ [shilling] Hallifax [currency] per pound, which is look'd upon here not be worth 2 pence a pound nor in England. He also purchased on your account a large quantity of beaver at 3/ and 9d per pound, which, by what Levy Salomons informs me (as the furs were all received by him for the person he purchased them off), are the greatest part what goes here two for one. This is in my opinion not your intention to trade in this country. Therefore I give you this for your information, being fully convinced that this letter by coming into your hands will never be made use of, as our circumstances will not permit us to be at enmity with any person, and I heartily wish you may find it otherwise for your sake.

As we could not perform our agreement with our creditors on account of not getting in our debts, we are obliged to carry on the bussiness some time longer, butt if you should chuse to have any connections in this country, I would recommend to you to examine the following proposals. That is, to consign as much of your West India goods to Levy Salomons in Montreal and Hayman Myars (in case he returns again to Quebec) or Mr. Stephen Moore, marchant, in Quebec, as both places will answer much better. Levy Salomons knowing the differences of peltries and the markets for the different ports so well that it undoubtedly will answer in this manner to have your effects mostly turn'd into furs, and have all the fine furr ship'd for your correspondent in London, and such as will answer your markt [Newport] and Philadelphia to be sent to your port which will allways be equal to cash.

I make no doubt but your remittances would yield from 20 to 30 per cent, and I am certain the profit on the furs will exceed those on your goods; and the whole profit in this coun-

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try on furs depends on the receipt of them here, the greatest part of which is received by Levy Salomons, and who you may depend on will do all in his power to promote your interest. Should you consider and think well of this plan, you may flatter yourselves to be able to carry on a larger trade to the West Indies than any man that ships here, and the merchants who remit in species would not be able either to buy or sell with you.

If you should chuse to be connected in this or any other manner you shall think proper, please let me know by post. As I cannot recommend any certain articles which would at present answer this market better than others, I leave the whole to the bearer, Mr. Myers. You may, if you should chuse, have some remittances in wheat. The price at present is from 4/ to 4/ and 6d lawfull [currency], per bushell.

I am, sir, your most obedient and humble servant,
Benjamin Lyon.

Per favor of Mr. Hayman Myers.⁵⁸

Under the English, the Canadians had begun to produce some wheat for export, particularly when there was a good crop and the British authorities permitted the grain brokers to send it out of the country. About fourteen months after Lyon wrote Lopez offering to do business with him, Aaron Hart of Three Rivers also wrote to the Newport shipper suggesting a barter arrangement:

Three Rivers, 9th May, 1771.

Mr. Aaron Lopez,
Sir:

I am favour'd with your letter of March 12th, likewise that of March 18th, and stricktly observed the contents.

I am sorry to say 'tis not in my power to comply with your kind proposal at the price you stipulate, as wheat is now 22d

Halef'x, p'r bushel, and it will at least cost 3*d* more p'r bushel expences before 'tis put on board your vessel.

Hat I been favour'd with your intentions one month sooner I cou'd have purchas'd any quantity at 20*d*.

If it will suit you I will ingage to purchas 3,000 bushels of wheat at 22*d* p'r bushel, H[alifax]. C[urrency]., without any com[mission]'s, you paying all the chargis of storidge, car-ridge, and puting on board, which will am't to not less than 3*d* per bushle. I will have no com[mission]'s, only you ar to shipe rum for the am't of the wheat without com's likewise, which shall be ready for you, provided I can have your ansver by the 1*d* of July at furthest, and am, sir,

Your most humble ser't,
Aaron Hart.⁵⁹

Why did Hart want rum? Rum was a big item in the Canadian economy, and Newport was a well-known source for this commodity. Many of the Canadian merchants had liquor licenses. Liquor was not only an important item in the Indian trade, but one of the commonest staples stocked by every country merchant. Every fur trapper, every workman on the job, was entitled to his daily ration of rum. Samuel Jacobs of St. Denis doled out a half-pint a day to the artisans and mechanics who worked for him. When the Harts of Three Rivers built a brewery, the lumber contract called for so and so many dollars "and a barrel of rum." It was a commodity that loomed large in the correspondence of every merchant.

In a normal two months' period Jacobs sold 1,900 gallons in a village general store. In the current price lists which his correspondents in Montreal sent him, rum was always included alongside of wheat, molasses, sugar, and brandy.

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Rum, then, was a staple, and the runners who scoured the countryside for wheat occasionally used it as a medium of exchange with the farmers. In this decade, the 1770's, Jacobs seriously considered building a large-scale distillery, large-scale for that time. One of the biggest then in Quebec had an annual production of 70,000 gallons; Jacobs proposed building one slightly larger which would turn out 200 gallons a day. The argument which he used with a prospective partner was that manufacturing hard liquor at home was bound to be profitable: the distiller would save duty, freight, insurance, and commissions, all considerable items. He was so determined to go ahead on the project that he informed his correspondent that if the necessary capital for the larger still could not be found, he would undertake to set up a smaller one on his own.

Samuel Jacobs devoted considerable thought to the idea of setting up a distillery, but his liquor business was only a sideline with him. His chief concern, as far as we can determine—more important even than that of running his “country store”—was the buying and selling of wheat. He was dealing in wheat as early as 1761, possibly even earlier. He was able to maintain excellent contact with the farmers, many of whom he met in his general store at St. Denis on the Richelieu. Except for a rare occasion when he was prepared to send a boatload of grain to Barcelona, Jacobs apparently did not attempt to export it.

As a wheat-buyer, however, he occupied a number-two post. The exporter, at the top, had a group of important agents throughout the country, key men in strategic localities, who bought the grain, stored it, and then shipped it

to the central warehouses and docks. These key men received cash advances from their principals, and in turn passed the cash down the line till it finally reached the dirt farmer. Jacobs was such a key man, dealing in thousands of *minots* or bushels of wheat.

Agents like Jacobs, in turn, employed a number of sub-agents who lived in convenient spots from which they sallied forth to make grain contracts or else sent out runners in their stead, to get in touch with individual farmers. Jacobs had buyers, Gatien at St. Charles, Besançon at St. Ours, and others. We know there was a great deal of competitive bidding for the peasants' or the seigneurs' crops, and it was not unusual to have minor agents bidding against each other, even though they were working for the same principal. At times, grumbled Jacobs, the chief buyers did not even know their own runners, for they are "like the Carolina statesman who does not know half his negroes." The end result of this bidding by "the stroling imps" against one another was to raise the prices, confuse the farmers, and enrage the bread consumers.

In the winter and spring of 1772-1773 the St. Denis merchant had some typical trouble. A Mr. Stuart had opened up two stores on the Chambly River and had started to cut the price on rum in order to squeeze out all competition, and Jacobs in particular. It was Stuart's intention, once he had driven the other traders out of the rum traffic, to raise the price again as soon as the river froze in the winter and made stock replenishment difficult. Not to be caught napping, Jacobs also cut his prices.

The Scotsman based his hope of inducing the peasants to

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buy his dry goods, drink his rum, and sell him their wheat and peas on the fact that he was related by marriage to one of the local priests. Jacobs, in a note which he wrote, scoffed at the thought that the priests could determine where the farmers would make their purchases: even though Stuart's "mother and sistre ware married to the priests themselves [it] would not hinder the inhabitants to buy cheap and sell dear. I shall not lead the van in these hearum scearum purchases [of wheat], neither will I lett them [Stuart and other buyers] run away with the roast. A supply of cash will be necessary. Allso your kind advice to what length I may go that I may not over purchase myself. It is enough to make ones heart bleed to see so fine a year as this sacrificed [by price-cutting on the part of the wheat buyers]."

Jacobs' letter books, several of which are extant, demonstrate how busy he was corresponding with his subagents, prodding them, pacifying them, encouraging them, and supplying them with specie. One of his men was a Mr. Burn, possibly a Quaker, for Jacobs addressed him with the familiar "thee." Or was this form of the pronoun but another expression of his weird humor?

Mr. Burn:

I hear the devil has got into thee again. Avoide that evil spirrit that makes thee go astray in that manner, and don't oblige me to neglect my bussiness to look after that which is in thy care. Thou will answer my letter I sent you yesterday and behave thyself better, or else I shall play damnation with you. I still remain, thy abused friend,

[Sam'l Jacobs.]

St. Denis, 22d May, 1773.⁶⁰

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Jacobs was something of an "original." The St. Denis businessman wrote and did things in his own unique way and style. Tradition tells us that in order to insure the payment of debts due him from delinquents, he would instruct the parish priest to mention his debtors by name after Mass.

Frequently his letters were full of homely saws and characteristic remarks. After a severe illness he wrote to a friend that he was as "weak as a rat that has been confined to a church." Announcing the birth of a son, he wrote a correspondent: "I got a lusty boy. Jump into the world the night before last." When one of his friends, "Dear Singleton," was burnt out in the city, he sent him this consolatory paragraph: "I am sincerely sorry for the accident happen'd you by the fire, and condole with you therein. Let's hope for the best. There are various scenes in trade. We ought not to be cast down by misfortune and gently handle prosperity. You are able to bustle." To a man angry at him for not answering a letter he wrote tolerantly: "You are too hasty to wair a sword. I have gained your displeasure for not answering your letters before I received them"; and in the same letter he continued: "And now send you . . . a fine black horse, not five years old, with a long tail; comes from an ancient remarkable family for horse flesh. I can learn of no fault he has, only that he is too cheap. . . . This one stands you in twenty-four dollars."

In March, 1773, Jacobs solicited the patronage of Mr. Aylwin, a well-known businessman and grain merchant. The allusions are not always clear. One might venture the guess, however, that Aylwin had a Scotch correspondent buying his grain, but now Jacobs, the Jew, was suggesting

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himself in his stead. In his own "Jacobsonian" style, more typical of the orderly room than of the countinghouse, he referred to himself as a Scotsman, and to the rival he would displace, as a Jew!

St. Denis, 12 March, 1773.

Mr. Aylwin,
Sir:

I received your favour of the ninth instant. I allways found your promisses fair and your action foule. Think of your honour which you pledg'd . . . and you'll have a hard task to find it. . . . Pray who the d[evil]. can trade with you now. . . .

I wish you well as you are cleaver and you know I am honest. Let the above ballance your ill treatment, undeserving.

It is impossible to leave my bussiness at this time or else would wait on you at Montreal in hopes to find part what has been reported of you false. But if you'll favour me with your company, crack a bottle Madaria, sink in oblivion what is past, I can sell you twenty thousand bushels wheat deliverable this spring.

Wish our misunderstanding had not happened, but if you are inclined to exchange your corrispondent, a Jew, for a Scotch man, depend on it, I'll serve you to the best of my knowledge with fidellity and sincearty.

So conclude[s], dear sir,

Your most hum'e and obedient servant,
[Sam'l Jacobs.] ⁶¹

Chapter 12

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EAGER to buy crops, Jacobs would make any kind of barter or deal. To a man who offered him his tobacco at a price, Jacobs answered that he would take the crop if the tobacco-grower, in turn, sold Jacobs his wheat. He not only sold grain but turned it into flour in a mill which he built. Like his principals, he engaged independently in speculation, and once proposed to corner the market. There are traditions that his angry townsmen smashed his wheat rafts in retaliation. The middle 1770's lent themselves to this type of commercial manipulation, for even prior to the Revolution the large number of troops sent to the colonies created a heightened demand for grain. When war actually broke out, the needs of the soldiers and the absence of competition from the provinces to the south further stimulated the market for Canadian wheat and the concomitant opportunity for speculation.

Certainly Jacobs watched the storm clouds of the oncoming war with keen interest: the report of the battle of

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Lexington in April, 1775, the fall of Ticonderoga and Crown Point on the river highway below him, the evacuation of Boston, the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and the struggle for New York City in the summer and fall of that same year. This was going to be a long war.

He also watched the market; he knew that the price of wheat would rise. At once he wrote to his agent Gatien at St. Charles, warned him what was going to happen, and sent him considerable sums of money to enable him to make heavy purchases of grain. Buy all you can, was his instruction, as quickly as you can and as cheaply as you can. Pay cash or buy on credit, whatever the occasion demands. Don't be picayunish where a few sols are concerned. And to make sure that his factor would understand what he meant, he repeated this order in a brief postscript. Other merchants, he warned, will soon be swarming all over the place to buy up the wheat, therefore "don't loose a sheep for a half peny worth of tarr." Pay a little more but get the grain!

By September 30th, Jacobs had modified his plans somewhat. He decided to turn his grain into flour. This would give him an even more desirable commodity. Accordingly, he instructed the faithful Gatien—and he probably sent similar instructions to other agents—to engage all the flour mills in his area.

St. Denis, 30 Septem'r, 1776.

Mr. Gatien:

I received yours. There is a plann just now come into my head which I wou'd be glad on receipt of this you wou'd execute.

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Go round to the sundries mills that are up your way, particularly them that the wheat can be easily carried to. Ask each of them how much they can grind for me before the frost setts in. And as much as they can engage to grind, so much I will furnish them. But as there is sundries mills that requires land carriage, the millers shou'd oblige themselves to bring it from the bateaus to the mill, and return it, when ground, to the bateaus that comes for it, beginning to work imediately.

I have sent you by the bearer Mr. Bodreau, five hundred and ten livres, eight sols. Pray let me know what quantity the mills can grind, and about what quantity of wheat you may have, that I may not engage myself too much for vessells. And send me down Lapparre [my clerk], as I can't do without him. In haste,

Yours sincerely,
Sam'l Jacobs.

Let the above be done without roumour.⁶²

By February, 1777, Jacobs was a commissary officer, back at the same type of job that had probably brought him into the country during the campaign for Quebec eighteen years earlier. His foresight in securing unhampered flour production for himself at the local mills began to pay dividends, for he used the flour to feed the troops in the valley. These were busy months for him. The German mercenaries had begun to arrive. Preparations were already under way for Burgoyne's expedition up the Richelieu and down into New York, along the familiar Champlain-Hudson route, past Jacobs' doorstep at St. Denis. In this expedition to threaten the New Englanders at their back doors and ultimately to envelop them, much would depend on the food supplies for the soldiers making the

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perilous trip along the rivers and through the wilderness. There were at least 7,000 troops to be fed, and Jacobs was one of the many men commissioned to undertake this most difficult of jobs.

Headquarters for his operations was his store at St. Denis. Jacobs was in constant communication with Gatien, now busily engaged in supplying troops with rations and other foodstuffs. Gatien evidently had written that the soldiers did not like the beef which he supplied. Supply them with better beef, was the answer. Do all you can to satisfy the troops. Jacobs, obviously, was trying to do a good, honest job. He knew what the men wanted; he was an old hand at the supply game.

St. Denis, 28th Feb'y, 1777.

Mr. Gatien,
Sir:

Yours of this date I received. I am sorry there appears some misunderstanding between you and the troops at your place.

If the beeff you have killed is not merchantable they, without doubt, have a right to refuse it, and as the Commissary General takes delight in haveing the troops well served, and does not like to hear complaints of either side, if it can be avoided, it is my advice, [if] the ox, you say, is *maigre* ["lean"], keep it back and serve the rest of the fresh meat.

Wait on the commanding officer, tell him you will buy what you can more, which I wou'd have you to do, by giveing six coppers per pound, as that will encourage the inhabitants to kill and bring you the quarter which will enable you to judge of its goodness. When the commanding officer finds you do your endeavour, and fresh provisions can't be had at that rate, I dare say he won't blame you.

As to the cash I sent you up to pay for the rations, if not

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already done, I wou'd have you to give it into the captain of militia's hands to distribute amongst those to whome it is due, takeing his receipt for the same, which is the way I do here to avoid all complaints. In haste,

Yours,

[Sam'l Jacobs.]

N. B. To make your fresh provisions hold out the longer, wou'd have you endeavour to serve oatmeal or peas, as part of the rations, which you may have by sending for.⁶³

There can be no doubt of Jacobs' loyalty to the English authorities . . . even if he did occasionally sell a bill of goods to the American invaders. It was to be expected that he, like the majority of the merchants, would be tied to the Empire by the strong bond of self-interest. We are, however, in a position to know that his devotion to king and crown remained constant, even under the most difficult of conditions.

During the trying autumn and winter days of 1775, when the American General Richard Montgomery and his men marched down along the Richelieu, took Chambly and besieged St. Johns, Jacobs kept a personal diary of the events that affected him in the little world of St. Denis. He wrote his impressions in English but used Hebrew script—no doubt in order to protect himself against prying eyes—and the result was an almost unintelligible account. Phonetic English in a French district, as pronounced and heard by a foreigner with a peculiar brogue of his own, transcribed into a Semitic script, could only result in a puzzling cryptogram. Nevertheless, from such part of the linguistic concoction as is understandable, it is obvious that Jacobs, even

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when threatened by his aroused neighbors, was determined to raise his cup to the king alone, while the enthusiastic peasants, embittered against seigneurs and clergy, were equally determined to dedicate their toasts to liberty and to the American Continental Congress.

However, in spite of the fact that he was supplying rations to the British troops and was a staunch partisan of the United Empire, it would be wrong to assume that he was heartily in favor of all the political policies pursued in Canada and in London by the English government. He was certainly no rebel but, like most of the English merchants in Canada, he wanted a larger measure of representative government in accordance with the better traditions of civil liberty.

The political attitude of Jacobs, and of all the merchants, was largely conditioned by two important British acts: the Proclamation of 1763 and the Quebec Act of 1774. By the first law the huge area to the west, the Great Lakes and the Mississippi basins, was detached from Quebec and placed under the direct control of the Empire, which created a gigantic Indian reservation there. The Canadian merchants resented the detachment of this vast wilderness from their own province of Quebec, a wilderness, so they believed, that should be reserved for their own exploitation of the Indians and the fur trade. Even more, the Anglo-Canadian businessmen resented the fact that Governors Murray and Carleton made no effort to bring about the establishment of the House of Representatives promised in the Proclamation. Such an assembly would have served to give the Protestant English merchants a larger measure of political

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and commercial control in the dominant French-Catholic province.

With a persistence worthy of the principle at stake, the merchants, Jacobs among them, kept sending in petitions from 1764 on, politely but firmly asking for more political liberty. The initial petition was followed by others in 1770, 1773, and 1774. There was no major appeal to London to which some of the Jewish merchants of Quebec, Montreal, and other towns did not subscribe their names.

The Quebec Act of 1774, the second of the two laws in question, reunited the land north of the Ohio River to the province of Quebec—and thus served in part to assuage the anger of the traders. But the merchants, mostly Protestant, bitterly resented the fact that the Catholic Church was given additional privileges and that French law was re-established, while trial by jury, habeas corpus, English commercial law, and the justice-of-the-peace system were discarded. The Catholic clergy, the military, and the seigneurs were still in the saddle. The long promised General Assembly was still unrealized, and the merchants grew increasingly bitter. Yet when the revolution broke out in Massachusetts in April, 1775, the sullen Canadian merchants refused to go along with their southern friends, and the only overt “act of revolution” was the blow struck by a Jewish merchant, David Salisbury Franks.

If Canadian Jewish traditions are correct, young David Salisbury Franks was a son of Abraham Franks of Quebec, another member of the well-known family of Anglo-American merchants. By 1771 the Abraham Frankses had moved to Montreal, where David is said to have served as

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president of the local Jewish congregation (1775), and where he emerged as a fervent sympathizer with the radical political aspirations of the American colonists.

On the day the Quebec Act went into effect some friend of liberty smeared the bust of King George III on the Place d'Armes, hung a wreath of potatoes around his royal neck, and attached an inscription with the caustic dedication: "Behold the Pope of Canada and the English fool." The following morning, the 2d of May, Francis M. P. de Bellestre, a French-Canadian who was devoted to the English, indignantly declared that the wretch who had perpetrated the insult was worthy of hanging. David Franks, who heard the loyal de Bellestre make this statement, replied sarcastically that: "It was not usual to hang people for such small offences, and that it was not worth while to do so." This led to a fist fight in which Franks struck his "blow"; the Frenchman came off second best. The next day de Bellestre swore out a warrant for Franks's arrest on the charge of an "atrocious" and "abhorrent insult to his Majesty's bust," and before the sun set a squad of soldiers with fixed bayonets had led him off to jail. The offer of a bail bond of £10,000 was refused, and he remained imprisoned for a week till he was finally released.

The Canadian David's knockout blow did not presage the downfall of the Canadian Goliath. True, the Catholic peasants, smarting under church tithes, feudal dues, and a Protestant overlord, had their grievances; the merchants, too, were dissatisfied. But neither group was ready to follow the other colonies into overt rebellion. They were zealous for the autonomy of their own Quebec, and anxious

lest the St. Lawrence Valley and the West be swallowed up in the emergent United States. Monopolistic control of the fur trade was the merchants' goal; they were opposed to the threatened expansion of settlers into the trans-Allegheny country, with the consequent retreat of game and Indians, and the destruction of the traders' chief industry. The economic prosperity of the St. Lawrence area and its competitive position in the hemisphere depended largely on the maintenance of trade with Great Britain in the form of furs for manufactured goods. For such reasons the Canadian merchants refused to sign the nonimportation agreements or to rebel against the mother country.

Yet there were some Canadians who were pro-American. Carleton, the governor, listed twenty-nine of them. A few merchants who loved liberty more than shillings and pence sacrificed the logic of personal gain and rallied to the American cause. Among the Jews, Franks was such a man; Joseph Bindon—who may have been a Jew—and Levy Solomons were two others. Bindon, or Bindona, one of the earliest of the pioneer English merchants, helped the Americans as they advanced up the Richelieu Valley on the way to Montreal and to Quebec. There was no question about his fervent loyalty to the ideals of the invaders. Later, when the Americans retired, he fled the country and in 1786 was named to the important post of clothier-general in the American government.

As for David Salisbury Franks, his blow at Bellestre was not merely a gesture. When General Montgomery took possession of Montreal in 1775, Franks gave him supplies and lent him money; later he became one of General

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Wooster's paymasters during the Canadian campaign, advancing his own funds to pay the men when the army was short of cash. Through his good offices and through his purse he did what he could to help the American troops in Canada. Consequently he was regarded as "one of the principle leaders of sedition." He was a marked man, and when the American Army retreated from Canada, he joined it as a volunteer. It would have been dangerous for him to remain.

The appearance of two, and possibly three, Jewish merchants among the rebels requires comment. Obviously they were acting counter to their own short-range economic interest. Earlier, the signatures of David Salisbury Franks, Joseph Bindon, Levy Solomons, and Aaron Hart to various petitions for more political autonomy merely indicated that they shared the views of the overwhelming mass of English-Canadian merchants. But a signature to a petition did not necessarily constitute an act of rebellion, and by 1776 the majority of the merchants were disposed to rest contentedly in the shadow of the British lion. Yet Franks, Bindon, and Levy Solomons were on the side of the Continental army, and the reason is probably not far to seek.

The recent Quebec Act of 1774 tended to revive the reactionary, discriminatory, pre-English pattern of the French, and augured ill for the future of the Jews in Canada. By implication at least, this new act, which became operative in May, 1775, closed the door to Jewish emancipation less than two weeks after the outbreak of the revolution which these Jews sensed would bring that equality now becoming more elusive than ever in Canada! It is not strange

that several Jews went along with the Americans in Canada; it is surprising that the others did not share or express the same sentiments.

Aaron Hart of Three Rivers, like Levy Solomons of Montreal, served for a time as a purveyor to some of the American invaders. It is difficult to determine whether Hart was motivated by any other interest than that of making money. Before the Americans left his town they ran up with him a series of debts of over \$2,000, not a cent of which was ever paid, as far as the records indicate. Levy Solomons, on the other hand, was probably in sympathy with the cause of the revolutionaries to the south, even though he continued to remain in Canada after the war was over. Guy Carleton, it must be noted, did not record either of these two in his list of persons who zealously served the rebels.

As far as we know, Solomons had come to the province at the time of the English conquest. As we have seen, he had gone through the harrowing experience of the Pontiac conspiracy, and, like the other members of the consortium with which he was affiliated, he had been broken financially by the post-Pontiac depression. With the other English merchants he had petitioned for a legislative assembly during the early 1770's. Montgomery, when he marched into Montreal, found that Solomons was no unwilling instrument. After all, Solomons belonged to Albany—where his headquarters was in 1763—as much as he did to Montreal, and, moreover, his wife Rebecca was the sister of David Salisbury Franks.

Solomons served as supply officer for the American hos-

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pitals in Montreal and took care of the personal needs of the wounded. This required a considerable outlay of cash, and he was expected to advance his own funds or to guarantee payment for the supplies which others provided. In addition, before the Continentals were driven out of Canada in 1776, Benedict Arnold, who succeeded Montgomery in command of the American forces, appropriated or raided the stocks of goods which Solomons had set aside for the Indian trade. Yet this act, unkind but probably of military necessity, did not change Solomons' heart. The sale of supplies was his business, and the fortunes of war were a risk. Above and beyond profits or losses, however, was the fact that after the Americans had gone he still helped the sick and wounded, who were left behind, to escape. Certainly the English looked upon him as a rebel, for Burgoyne ordered him thrown out of his house into the street with his goods . . . on July 4, 1776. He even had to leave town. Yet he returned to become the president of the synagogue in 1778, and, until his death in 1792, a successful and highly respected Canadian merchant.

In 1784, the year after the treaty of peace was signed, Solomons addressed the following memorial to the American Congress, asking for repayment for the moneys and goods he had advanced to aid the sick, the wounded, and the imprisoned.

To the United States of America in Congress assembled:

The memorial of Levy Solomons of Montreal, in the Province of Quebec, merchant, sheweth

That General Montgomery, on his arrival at Montreal in 1775, sent for your memorialist and desired him to act as pur-

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veyor to the American hospitals in Canada, for which service General Montgomery promised him two guineas p[er]. day for himself, and five shillings sterling p[er]. day for a clerk.

In consequence of which your memorialist immediately procured and furnished a large house for the accommodation of the sick, and, sometime after, two other houses for smallpox hospitals. The whole expence of fitting up and furnishing the said hospitals, as well as that of providing every thing necessary for the patients (particulars of which are exhibited in accounts marked A) was supported entirely by himself.

He likewise at the requisition of Col. Richmore, Captains Lamb, Motte, and Goeforth, furnished sundries for their men. Sundries also to General Wooster and Mr. Tucker, and to Major Nicholson sundries for the troops before Quebec, particulars of all which will appear p[er]. the accounts marked B and E.

That after the death of General Montgomery [December 31, 1775], when American affairs in Canada begun to wear an unfavorable aspect, when all the hard money your memorialist could procure was expended in the service, and his own credit (on account of the part he had taken) ruined, he applied to General Wooster, who, unable to assist, urged him to fall upon some method of still providing for the preservation of the sick. Your memorialist had at that time a large quantity of rum on commission from Mess'rs Fargues and Vialars of Quebec, with orders not to sell it for less than a dollar a gallon. Of this rum, at General Wooster's desire, and under his promise of indemnification, your memorialist sold about 4,000 gallons at four livres, five sols, by which he sustained a loss of nearly 7,000 livres.

That during the time Gen. [Benedict] Arnold was out at LaChine, he found it necessary to appropriate sundry goods, arms, and ammunition—that your memorialist had stored there and intended for the Upper Country trade—to the use of the

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troops under his command, the particulars of which will appear p. account marked C.

And that after the Continental forces had retired from Montreal, General Arnold sent a party from Laprairie, who, without the consent or privity of your memorialist, seized and carried off from LaChine a quantity of Brazil and carrot tobacco with other Indian goods, the property of your memorialist and by him destined for Michilimackinac, for which he never obtained a receipt or any acknowledgement whatever. The particulars and amount of these articles are exhibited in the account D.

That your memorialist continued his support of and assistance to the American Army 'till the day they left Montreal, when being pressed closely by General Carleton and when the friends to government here had engaged or sent out of the way every cart and carriage in town, so that the sick, the hospital stores, and bedding, etc., must have inevitably fallen into the hands of the enemy, but for the extraordinary exertions of your memorialist,

At this conjunction, he, by sending all his own carriages and procuring others from the country, happily effected the purpose of getting them off . . . happily for the American party, but eventually of most disagreeable consequences to himself, since this last circumstance more than any other has exposed him to insults and injuries from people of every denomination in the province, of which you will allow him to mention a few instances.

On the first of July, 1776, he received an order from General Burgoyne to quit his house in four days, a house he had rented from May to May for seven years. On the fourth day he was turned into the street by an Ensign Parker of the 29th Reg't and a party of soldiers: himself, his wife, and children, destitute of everything except the cloaths on their backs, and all his goods and furniture in the house left to the management of the soldiery.

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In this situation, without money, without friends, he obtained permission to shelter his family in the house of a former acquaintance who, at the end of five days, informed him he must leave her house immediately, she having been made to understand it was dangerous to harbour so notorious a rebel.

He then retreated to a small vault [room] where he continued two months in a miserable situation, almost without the means of subsistence, and being under the frowns of government, deserted by every one. At length such part of his effects as had escaped the pillage of the soldiery were thrown upon the parade and himself informed he might either leave them or take them as he thought proper, and that this even was too great indulgence to a rebel.

Notwithstanding the persecution your memorialist has suffered, he has always uniformly adhered to the American side, and as the face of his affairs have taken a more favorable turn, he has been enabled from time to time to lend his assistance to such prisoners as have been brought in here, particularly Col. Campbell from Virginia, Col. Stacey of Massachusetts Bay, Captain Wood of New York State, and others to a considerable amount, a part only of which he has been reimbursed this fall, and doubtless Capt. Wood, who stands engaged for the whole, will take an early opportunity of discharging the remainder. In this, however, should he fail, Congress will hardly think it reasonable that their memorialist shall be the sufferer.

On the retreat of the Continental Army from this province, your memorialist had upwards of \$1,400 of Continental paper money in his possession, part of which he had received on account from General Wooster, which have remained 'till this day useless in his hands, and which he herewith sends, together with the accounts above referred to, by a gentleman vested with his power of attorney, who will attend the determination of Congress thereon.

Your memorialist has only to observe, with respect to the accounts herewith exhibited A, B, and C, that they were

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drawn out by Mr. Benjamin Thompson (his clerk during the time of the above transactions) who will attend and, if required, authenticate them upon oath.

With respect to the loss sustained on the rum sales, your memorialist cannot pretend to speak with the same precision, having irrecoverably lost his books and most of his papers at the time he was so cruelly turned out of his house. He can however truly declare that this account as above stated is not in the least exaggerated.

Your memorialist can with confidence refer you to the Hon'ble Mess'rs Corral [Charles Carroll of Carrollton, Benjamin] Franklin, and Chace [Samuel Chase], the Generals, Lamb and Hazen, and every officer at that time in Canada, for an account of his conduct during the stay of the Continental Army in that province, and to almost every other gentleman whom the fortune of war has brought prisoner to Montreal since, for an account of his subsequent behaviour.

Your memorialist therefore prays that the foregoing circumstances may be taken into consideration, not in the least doubting but his real advances will be reimbursed to him with legal interest, his services and his sufferings rewarded and compensated, and that the justice and candour of Congress will oblige him to consider it his duty to pray for the prosperity of the United States of America.

Levy Solomons.

Montreal, November 15th, 1784.⁶⁴

The records available do not inform us whether the petitioner was paid.

The consortium, previously referred to, did not maintain a common front when the Revolutionary War broke out. Levy Solomons was an American patriot, but Ezekiel

Solomons—probably a relative—and Chapman Abraham were staunch supporters of the English regime.

As late as 1780 these latter two were still struggling to emerge from the morass of debt into which the Indian uprising of 1763 had plunged them. Ezekiel Solomons finally entered bankruptcy in 1780. But even though he was hard pressed financially, he managed to continue his business as a trader with his headquarters at Mackinac. He was to be associated with this village for at least forty-five years till his death sometime in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Mackinac was a French-Catholic town, and in 1778 the people there wanted a missionary priest. But a missionary required money to live. Accordingly, a subscription list was sent around, and some time later Ezekiel Solomons, an honored member of the Montreal synagogue, obligated himself for the sum of 50 livres, a handsome amount. Benjamin Lyon made a like contribution. The exact reason that moved him—and Lyon—to make this philanthropic gesture is unknown to us: it may have been an act of pure kindness and good will; or, like his fellow traders, he may have wanted a missionary to police the morals of the turbulent French, the “breeds,” and the “savages.” It probably never occurred to him—or did it?—that if he really wanted to do something for his customers he might stop selling them rum and brandy. The English military commanders and the imperial authorities at Quebec understood the gravity of this problem; the traders closed their eyes. Real profits lay in the liquor traffic.

Solomons' lines reached out to far places. Some of his

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furs must have come from as far west as the foothills of the Rockies, for he and his partner Grant sent a load of supplies to strategic Lake Nipigon, west of Lake Superior. There they could siphon out furs from the backyard of the Hudson's Bay Company to the east, and at the same time barter for beaver that came down the Saskatchewan from the distant west. More and more, as Solomons and his friends reached out for furs, it became patent that this could not be a simple or one-man enterprise. As early as 1761 some of the traders, dealing in Saskatchewan River furs, had made an agreement to work co-operatively. They pooled their stocks and divided the profits, the furs. Co-operation was desirable and necessary because of the heavy expense of doing business, because of the dangers of competition and price-cutting, and because of the obvious advantages of monopolistic control and price-fixing. And when war broke out in 1775, the British authorities encouraged the creation of the "general store" or co-operative centralized enterprise; it was easier to watch one company than twenty-five or thirty and thus to cut down the smuggling of much needed supplies into the United States, then famished for English consumers' goods.

Accordingly, the commandant at Mackinac, in June and July, 1779, encouraged a group of about thirty traders and companies, operating in that area, to form a loose trading partnership, something like the usual shipping "adventure" in which several persons were "concerned." Under the terms of the twenty-article agreement, which was to run for about a year, the traders created a single store, forebore to trade privately, and agreed to split the profits in propor-

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tion to the stock thrown into the common pot. The Mackinnac Company of 1779 had two Jewish members, Ezekiel Solomons and Benjamin Lyon. The latter was also a member of the merchandising committee.

Although Chapman Abraham had been trading all this time in the Upper Country, he was not "concerned" in the 1779 co-operative store. The year before, Chapman had been elated to hear that Frederick Haldimand, his old commanding officer, was returning to Canada to succeed Guy Carleton as governor. In 1760 he had worked under Haldimand, supplying several regiments. If in those days he was a purveyor—and not a mere sutler—then he must have possessed considerable capital, or at least an excellent credit rating, for the financing of a supply operation involving thousands of men was "big business." Now with his old chief back, Abraham looked forward to new opportunities, economically speaking, a chance to collect some of the old debts.

To His Excellency, Frederick Haldimand, Esquire, Captain General and Governor in Chief of the Province of Quebec and the territories thereon depending in America, Vice Admiral and Keeper of the Great-Seal thereof, etc., etc., etc.

May it please your Excellency: Imprest with a deep and lively sense of those favors I have already experienced under your Excellency's command, permit me to testify the joy and satisfaction I now feel on your happy arrival in this province.

It is so much the more agreeable as I have already experienced your Excellency's kindness to me during the last war [with the French and the Indians to 1763], when I had the honor of supplying several regiments with necessaries under your command.

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Permit me likewise to assure your Excellency that neither my loyalty or zeal for his Majesty's service have in the least abated, that during the present unfortunate contest, I flatter myself in having shewn new testimonies of my attachment for his Majesty's service under the command of your late worthy predecessor, Sir Guy Carleton, particularly in being one of those who had the honor of repelling the rebels at Long Point [Montreal, September, 1775], who, with an effrontery only peculiar to themselves, had formed the design of taking this city, and likewise in [1775] being one of a party that was detached from Quebec to surprize a party of Mr. [Benedict] Arnold's men just before that town was invested by the rebels; and lastly having turned out a volunteer with the troops when the rebels were defeated at Three Rivers [June, 1776].

This enumeration of my services, I assure your Excellency, proceeds not from a vain misplaced pride. It is only intended to inform your Excellency of my loyal conduct at a time when I am sorry to say that many of my fellow-citizens, unfortunately for them, gave way to those baneful insinuations which a despicable set of seditious men and tools of an unnatural rebellion endeavored to diffuse throughout the whole province.

That having been deeply engaged in the trade of the Upper Countries for these many years past, I have unavoidably many considerable outstanding debts due me there. Therefore, relying on your Excellency's past kindness, permit me most humbly to supplicate you may be pleased to recommend me to the care and attention of the commandants of the respective posts, by whose kind assistance I may be enabled to carry on my business to my satisfaction and advantage.

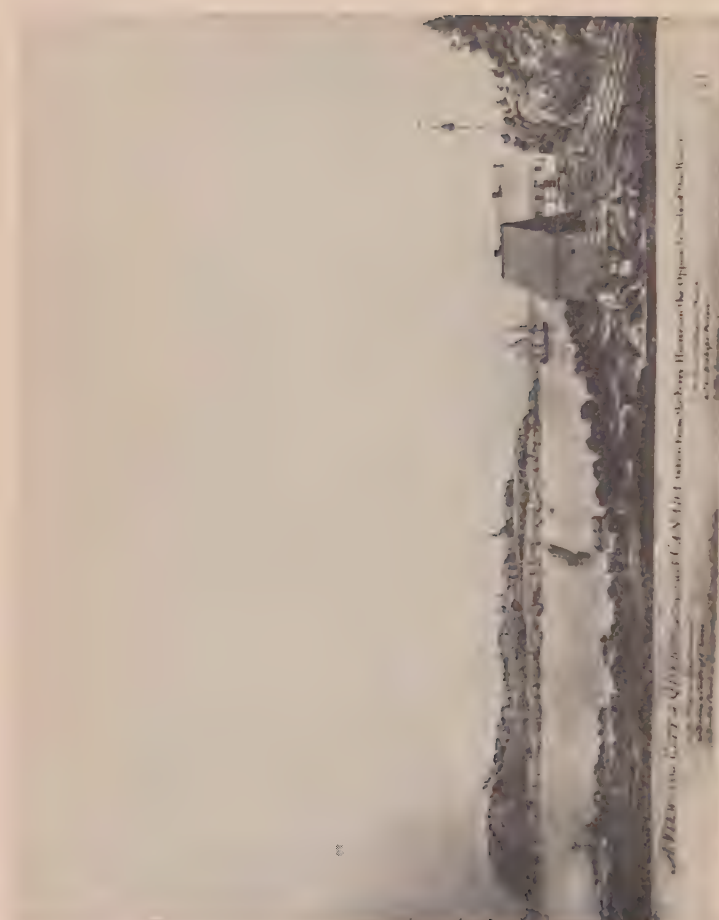
That your Excellency may enjoy every blessing of this life is the sincere and fervent wish of your Excellency's

Very humble and obedient servant,
Chapman Abram.

Montreal, 11th August, 1778.⁶⁵



THREE RIVERS IN 1784



QUEBEC IN 1784

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Letters of recommendation such as Abraham requested could be of real value to a merchant. The post commander, as at Mackinac, stuck his nose into every detail of the life of the people who came to the fort. He supervised the trading, watched the prices, controlled the Indians, and could be very helpful in the collection of money outstanding. The post commander could almost make or break a man.

We know very little of Chapman Abraham's affiliations. Our sources are inadequate. If he was the David, son of Abraham, who signed the Montreal congregational roster at this time, then he was a practicing Jew. On the other hand, in 1763, according to a very friendly letter from a business associate, James Sterling of Detroit, one Chapman Abraham was addressed facetiously as "Damned Jew," and told to start acting like a Christian now that he was baptized. The statement, however, need not be taken too literally. Frontier wit was anything but delicate. One suspects that the reference was to some carousal and that the baptism was a secular one of immersion into liquor, rather than a priestly ceremony into water.

The two Solomons, Ezekiel and Levy, we know, were "good" Jews, that is to say, they were active in the synagogue. Samuel Jacobs was not. Like Ezekiel Solomons, he had married out of the faith—his wife Marie-Josie Audet Lapoint was a French-Canadian Catholic. As far as the records indicate, Jacobs never became a member of the one Jewish congregation in Canada, nor did he make any contribution to it. Yet Jacobs was no escapist trying to assimilate and to deny his Jewish origin. On the contrary, he was

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very conscious of his background, even cocky about it, and ready at the drop of a hat to affirm it. Every time—almost every time—he wrote his name, he proudly proclaimed his origins by writing the word Samuel in Hebrew in the circle of the flourish with which he finished his given name. In 1778 he wrote to one of his Gentile friends: “I was disputing all last night with a German officer about religion. Tho’ I am not a wandering Jew, yet I am a stirring one,” by which he probably meant that he was always ready to talk about anything and to tackle everything. He was in constant correspondence with the Jews of Three Rivers, Montreal, and Quebec, but had committed himself, apparently, to rearing his children as Christians. His two girls were sent to Quebec to be educated and were put in the Ursuline school, not because it was Catholic and Christian, but because it was the best and cleanest convent school in town. As a matter of fact, the arrangements had been made, not by Jacobs, but by his Quebec correspondent, Charles Grant, a Protestant.

Two of his three boys were probably also in school in Quebec at the same time. As Jacobs travelled about during the war years in “His Majesty’s service” he would drop a note now and then to the children, as for example one written from Sorel, or William Henry, on the St. Lawrence, to the second son, Jacob, who was called also James or Levy:

Sorel, 6th Oct’r, 1779.

D’r Jacob:

Since I closed my letter to you, lighted by chance on three barrels of cranberries which I embrace with pleasure by this opportunity. One is for your master, Mr. Reed, one for your

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friend, Mr. Charles Grant, and the third for your friend Mr. Thos. Ellvin [Aylwin]. See them delivered your self with my kindest compliments. Excuse my not writing to them as I hope to be down as soon as His Majesty's service, I am now in, will permit, which I hope will be ere long.

I am your

Loving and effectionate,
Father.⁶⁶

One of the boys at Quebec boarded at the home of Elias Salomon or Solomons for two years while going to school. Through the bill which Salomon presented we can trace the externals, at least, of the school career of the lad from St. Denis, beginning with a box and truckage to the house of Salomon on September 1, 1778, and ending with a trunk for the return trip on September 1, 1780. In between are entries for a nightcap, shoes, shirts, and, with the coming of the Canadian winter, mitts and a fur cap. It is surprising that Papa Samuel—"Honored Sir"—had not given the boy a fur cap, for Jacobs, like almost every merchant in Canada, also dabbled in furs, which he sent direct to the London market . . . and lost money. With the winter season dancing lessons started, but they lasted for only a year. The items continued, for shoes and shoe repairs, for stockings, black ribbons, plated buckles, a silk handkerchief, a hat, a penknife to trim his goose quills, and a barber. If this bill is complete—and such bills usually are complete to the penny—then this was the only haircut he got in two years. Or was the 5 shillings and 9 pence expense for a minor surgical operation at the hands of the "barber"? Regularly there were entries for "pomatim" for the hair and a "black

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ball" for the shoes. This boy was anointed from head to foot, and the girls must have sniffed him admiringly as he passed them by.

The bill for the second year was much like that for the first except for the purchase of a silver "broach," postage for letters, a black as well as another silk handkerchief, and a pair of garters. The school work seems to have been more intensive this second year, for he bought a "cypering book" and wore out two penknives. The bill, of course, included a statement for washing, for board, and for spending money—Elias Salomon allowed him six pence a week. His tuition was handled separately; no doubt the master, Mr. Reed, billed the father at home or collected directly from Charles Grant.

From the vantage point of our century, the bill submitted—£69 2s. 8d. for two years for all expenses except tuition—seems modest, but something went wrong; Jacobs was dissatisfied. Evidently he refused to pay the bill, and was disputing it two years later, even though Salomon had advanced his own funds to support the boy during his student days. Charles Grant, who had been the boy's guardian while he was in town, had his doubts about the justness of the demands, and advised Jacobs not to pay. Jacobs even refused to write Salomon, for he suspected that the latter was showing his letters to strangers, and the Richelieu Valley merchant was sensitive not only about his personal affairs but also about his English grammar and spelling. Salomon retorted that he was not betraying his friend; no one but Salomon's daughters saw the letters. Salomon's facility with the pen—or did his daughters write his letters?

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—was of a higher order, as witness his indignant reply to the St. Denis merchant:

Quebec, 8th April, 1782.

Mr. Sam'l Jacobs,
Sir:

I wrote you twice of late but did not receive any answer to either of my letters, for which reason I would wish that you would let me know by return of post wether it is thro' any of my misconduct that you do remain silent.

Consious of having acted as a man of honor both to you and your son, it hurts me very much that you do not think me worthy of an answer. I need not enlarge upon a subject of this kind, but I can't help telling you that your actions are rather ungratefull.

You may plead as an excuse that you would not wish your letters to be seen by a stranger. To witch I must answer you that I never made it my bussiness to make a public affair of my doings, and that any letter you direct to me shall be read by none but my daughters, who both are able to read a leageable hand writing, as allso to form ideas and sence of a sensible letter.

I am, sir,

Your most humble serv't,
Elias Salomon.⁶⁷

To be sure, Jacobs did not write good English, and most if not all of the "fair copies" of the letters that went to his numerous correspondents, agents, and friends were corrected and written out by his clerks. Communications in French and German also came in, and although he certainly knew both languages, he used a clerk for them too. On occasion he wrote out the rough drafts and then turned them over to a clerk, who struggled to rewrite them, incor-

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porating his own corrections . . . and his own mistakes. In one of the drafts, the clerk found the following curious formations: astemet, instan, leve, apten, modle, finged, reda, "bard," shod, "den," and axpekt, but his ear was attuned to his master's speech, and what he read he transmuted to: esteemed, instant, leave, obtained, model, finished, ready, board, should, then, and expect. Jacobs was eager to improve his English and his script, and among his personal papers are a homemade pamphlet giving the basic rules of English grammar, scraps of paper with biblical verses which he had carefully parsed, and an occasional quotation written out in a fine and flourishing clerical hand.

Good English or not, Jacobs was an enterprising businessman. Although, in some of his letters to his creditors, he had to plead piteously for more time to pay his bills, he did manage to survive and eventually to prosper. His store at St. Denis was probably the largest and best stocked in that part of the country, and at one time or another he owned property in Crown Point, St. Ours, St. Denis, Sorel, Montreal, and Quebec.

Abruptly, in 1782, it was announced in Quebec by Uriah Judah—one of the Aaron Hart clan—that Samuel Jacobs had died. Charles Grant was very much upset—all this had come so suddenly—but he was happy that the Jacobs' children at school in town were not told the sad news. But the eighteen-year-old Samuel, Jacobs' first-born, who was also in the city at the time, did hear the report and was greatly shocked. Now the canny Grant was something of a skeptic, and he did not like or trust Uriah Judah. Therefore, in

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the midst of his sorrow, he began to investigate. He found that Judah was wrong. Jacobs was alive.

Young Samuel Jacobs was very much interested in his father's affairs and was probably associated with him in business. From home in St. Denis, he wrote to his parent then on a visit to Quebec. The letter was sent by way of the postoffice in Berthier, across the river from Sorel, and when it failed to reach Jacobs, Sr., at the capital city, it was returned to St. Denis. Jacobs, Jr., wrote a fine hand, and we may be sure that his father was proud of his son's florid signature; the "J" of Jacobs, measuring over three inches in height, might have been envied by John Hancock.

St. Dennis, 12 Oct'r, 1783.

Hon'd Sir:

There is a great while that we have not heard from you, which makes us uneasy.

I wrote you a letter by Capt. Black. Since his departure we heard that they was a vessel containing *eleven* hundred bush's salt, etc., cast away in the River Richélieu. And it is sayd that it belongs to us. As we heard nothing about it by you, think it is only a false report, but still makes mamma uneasy.

The family are all well and they joins with me in wishing you a good state of health.

I remain, hon'd sir,

Your dutiful son,
Sam'l Jacobs.⁶⁸

Uriah Judah's report of the death of Samuel Jacobs was four years premature; the merchant did not die till 1786. His widow soon moved to Three Rivers, where she re-married.

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Three Rivers, it will be recalled, was the home of Aaron Hart, and also of his relatives, the Judahs. Hart's cousin and wife, Dorothy, or, as she was called, Dolly, was a Judah, probably a sister of Uriah. Another brother of the family was Samuel Judah, a merchant in Montreal.

Samuel Judah was in constant touch with Aaron Hart. He wrote Hart on January 26, 1784, that letters had reached Montreal from England, dated September, 1783, with the glad tidings that the treaty of peace had been signed and that the independence of the United States had been recognized by the English.

The Judahs leaned heavily on their rich cousin and brother-in-law. The war had brought Samuel no luck; he was bankrupt and was trying to settle with his creditors for ten per cent on the pound. Now, in the spring of 1784, he was on his way to Detroit again with a cargo—he had been there in 1780—hoping to improve his fortune. Before he left he wrote to Aaron that he was sending him a load of goods, including some Hyson tea, a puncheon of rum, and a package of books. The large candles which Aaron wanted were all gone; Samuel's father had taken them with him to New York, and they had been used in the Shearith Israel *shool* on the Day of Atonement in memory of the dead. The books he was sending were twenty-one volumes of Bell's *British Theatre* and a fifteen-volume edition of Smollett's *History of England*. Don't let the children get at the plates in the book, he warned; they'll smear them or destroy them.

Apparently Samuel Judah was the intellectual of the clan—maybe that was why he made no money. He had a li-

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brary of his own of over eighty books, not one of which was of Jewish interest. Quite a number of the English classics were there: Shakespeare, the *Spectator* of Addison and Steele, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, the works of Pope and Swift, and Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*. Dictionaries and gazetteers and grammars were spiced with a cook book. There were various bound magazines, travel books, and an occasional volume of poetry. In the field of political science his library was represented by *Acts of Parliament*, the *Annual Register*, and the *Parliamentary Register*. In the field of American history he possessed two works: Abbé Raynal's *Philosophical and Political History of the . . . East and West Indies*, and Hutchinson's *History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*. If the formula for a good library is the same as that for a good story—sex, aristocracy, and theology—then this library contained the necessary ingredients, for *Trials for Adultery*, Bret's *Grecian Courtesan*, *The Adventures of a Jesuit*, and a volume on the peerage rubbed elbows. It must be admitted, however, that the theological ingredients were neither very conspicuous nor profound.

In the winter of 1784, the English and French subjects humbly laid still another petition at the foot of the throne, asking for the full enjoyment of their civil rights. Samuel, now home from Detroit, and other Judahs signed it. Like other subjects of the province, "ancient and new," the Jews of Canada envied the new liberty of the republic to the south and asked for a House of Representatives with the power to lay taxes and duties, and for a "constitution and government on . . . fixed and liberal principles."

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Back in Three Rivers, Aaron Hart and two sons—still in their early teens—also subscribed their names to the memorial. The furtherance of both provincial and local government was close to the heart of Aaron. When the provincial Committee of Council for Commerce and Police wrote to the merchants of Three Rivers asking for suggestions to improve the province in the post-war world, Aaron Hart's name headed the list of the four who answered. The other three were a Frenchman, a Scotsman, and an Englishman. He and his friends believed that they had the solution to this problem. If the province was to prosper, if trade and commerce were to flourish, then it was imperative that there be a larger measure of local political autonomy. In their reply they advocated establishment of public schools and public markets, the regulation of coinage, measures, and weights, the proper registration and preservation of deeds and mortgages, and adequate bankruptcy laws. Also proposed were new local courts that would meet weekly and have the power to recover petty debts.

Aaron's interest in good government should not be associated with any personal desire for political preferment. Uriah Judah was once the prothonotary of Three Rivers, but not Aaron. Aaron had no wish to hold office. In this he differed radically from his sons; as they grew to manhood they manifested strong political ambitions. Aaron had been in charge of the town postoffice—the second in Canada—but that was a commercial arrangement with Benjamin Franklin, the deputy postmaster general. When, in the next decade, Moses, Aaron's first-born, proposed running for office, the father warned him that any honor he might se-

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cure by holding office would be more than counterbalanced by attacks on him as a Jew.

Aaron must have run up against a great deal of anti-Jewish sentiment in the forty years in which he lived in French-Canadian Three Rivers. Only a man who had taken many a hard knock, had been cursed as a "Jew" by the drunken *engagés*, or politely snubbed by the rural aristocracy would have written to his politically ambitious son: "You will be opposed as a Jew. You may go to law, but be assured, you will never get a jury in your favor nore a party in the House for you." The old man was right: when Ezekiel Hart, a younger son, ran for office in the province about twelve years later, everything his father had prophesied came to pass.

This Jewish seigneur of Bécancour had no social hankerings, but he apparently was eager to form a Hart dynasty. His will created a sort of entail for his first-born, but he did not fail to make ample provision for his wife, his three younger sons, and his four daughters.

As Aaron's financial security grew, his acts of charity increased. He was particularly devoted to the Ursuline nuns in town and once extended credit to them to the extent of 8,000 livres, at times accepting no interest. On various occasions he won their love and affection by sending them gifts, and when his girls studied at the convent they were given special consideration as the children of a devoted friend. Although he was almost completely divorced from Jewish communal influence by virtue of his isolation, his interest in Judaism did not abate one whit. In his own home he was scrupulously observant of Jewish practice—

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though one might well ask what he did about securing kosher meat in Three Rivers.

In February, 1786, he sent Moses to the States on a business trip, and to make sure that the eighteen-year-old boy would observe all the holydays he gave him a note on the Jewish holidays that fell in the months of March and April. Having been well-trained by his father, Moses kept a combination itinerary and expense account which enables us to follow him on his journey from Three Rivers to New York and back. It was to be a quick trip, no dawdling, for his father expected him back early in April to spend *Pesah*, the Passover, at home. However, were he to be held up anywhere for any length of time, he was to spend the holydays in New York and to draw on Uncle Harry Hart for any extra money he might need.

Naturally, Moses took the short road to the States, the Champlain-Hudson route. He headed up the river to Montreal, bought his father a shaving box there, moved to La Prairie on the other side of the St. Lawrence, cut over to St. Johns, and continued by horse and boat till he reached Kingsbury, New York, where Uncle Harry was then living.

Kingsbury was an important town, about fifty-five miles north of Albany, at the portage point between the Hudson and the Lake George-Champlain chain. Moses was to talk to his Uncle Harry about the possibility of getting the United States and some of the old army officers to pay for the goods and supplies Aaron had furnished the American troops at Three Rivers during the late war. See if something can't be done to settle the Congress debt for cash or government securities or land grants. And what are we

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going to do about the "Continental" currency they gave us? If Uncle Harry has anything of real importance to report in this matter, invite him to come to Three Rivers, but if he doesn't want to go that far, tell him I'll meet him about halfway, at St. Johns. And ask your Uncle Harry what he means by telling me to move to New York. I've always made a good living in Three Rivers, enough to support a large family. What could I do in New York? My correspondents, Phyn and Ellice, would not ship me any goods there; they have their own agents in that town. You want me to go to New York, Harry, but what are you doing at Kingsbury and Albany, "amongst the worst sett of men from the outcast parts of New England?" And by the way, don't forget to tell Uncle Harry to stay out of the staves business; prices are so low they barely cover the freight. Let him go in for making potash; there's an excellent profit in it if he can only produce it cheaply enough.

From Kingsbury, Moses went to Albany and then by sloop to New York. Once in the big city, Moses determined to tarry and to have a good time. Of course there was business to attend to. Father wanted \$2.00 worth of Ryan's Worm Cakes, to be had at Mr. Gaines's. Mother wanted him to buy a good Negro wench for house work—the last one had died—and if the price was right father wanted a Negro hand who knew something about farming, could handle an ax, and work in the garden. Then there was family to be visited: "Mammy," his grandmother, and all the other Judahs. There were friends: the Hyam Myers' and the other Myers', Uriah Hendricks, the rich Mr. Hayman Levy, the aristocratic Gomez', and above all, Mr.

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Eleazar Levy, who had known father in the good old days. There could be no question, the family hoped Moses would find a wife for himself.

Moses went to *shool*, made an offering, gave something to the *hazzan*, Mr. Seixas, and even remembered the beadle, Mr. David S. Hays. He bought a pair of shoes, an expensive hat, and had the tailor measure him for "vescoat," coat, and breeches. While waiting to be fitted and between calls on the family, he made an excursion to Long Island (two shillings, six pence). He went to the theatre; he saw *The Provoked Husband* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, and before he left town he had time to squeeze in a third play. The barbers found him a good customer, and he did not forget to tip the maid before he left the city. If she was pretty he probably stole a kiss from her, for if coming events cast their shadows before them, he was hardly a shrinking violet where women were concerned. Indeed, the young man had already given his parents many an anxious hour on this score.

Pesah, which began on the eve of the 12th of April, he observed in New York, and it was not until at least a month later that he started up the river for Montreal on the return trip, carrying with him for the voyage a liberal supply of coconuts, limes, lemons, and assorted sweetmeats.

All this was not according to schedule; originally, it is to be recalled, he was to be home by Passover. Even before Moses got to New York it was evident that he would not be back that soon, and his father and mother reiterated their instructions:

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Three Rivers, 8th March, 1786.

Dear Mo:

We rec'd your letters of 2d and 5 ins[tant]. Am sorry to find that you had not warm cloths enofe with you and that the lakes are bad. Thear for I hope you will not risk in any danger if you find that you cane not be hear *Pesah*. You will acarding to my instrucktions go to New Yark and keep *Pesah*. Should you want any clothes to apper in . . . you will git a good suit made in New Yark. Shoud you be shart in money, you take up as much as you want frome my brother Harry.

I hope you are safe arrived some time before you receive this, and have settled all to my instrucktions with my brother to your satisfaction. Should you want any pints [points] consarning what is due me, he hase letters frome me which pints out every thing you will are cane [or can] want.

You will say as passeble about your bussinniss to any of the Jues in New Yark nore to your Unkils to [too]. You most remain *Pesah* in a Jues house. Pray take care of your self and God bless you. Frome your

Affection'd father,
Aaron Hart.

[Postscript from his mother, Dolly Judah Hart.]

Dear Moses:

This letter will be conveyed to you by Mr. Baby that lives at Jack Morris, who is going to York. I am sorry to find the lakes are dangerous, but hope before this reaches you, you will be safe at your journey's end. Your Dadda has order'd you to get made a suit of clothes at York which will be quite necessary if you are there Passovir. I am sorry you had any cause to regret leaving the round of beef. I hope you took enough with you not to want on the road.

When you arrive you will on my account say every think affectionate to my d'r Mammy and rest of my family, not for-

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getting what I told you. I have nothing new to add. You will go to Mr. Eleazar Levy and present my best respects to him and Mrs. Levy and to Mr. Solom'n Myers Cohen and Mrs. Cohen and family [formerly of Quebec], Mr. Hyam Myers and family.

'Tis needless to mention to you, I am sure, you will be particularly attentive to the business you are sent upon. If there should be any difficulty, advise with them who is able to give you good advise, and consider well with your self before you do any thing.

Don't forget to get me a wench. Josette is sick at the nunnery since Sunday last. We are all well here except myself. Have got a sore throat and head ach. I have no more to add, but remain, dear Moses, your

Affectionate mother,
D. Hart.

Wednesday, 8th March.

[Postscript of the father, Aaron Hart.]

My com[pliment]'s to Mr. Haym Levy, all the Myers', Uriah Hendricks, all the Gomes' and Judahes, Eleaser Levy, and all my auld achventance, Manuvel and Myer Myers.

You will sett af, if noting af pertickeler bussiness keeps you, as soon as the haledayes are over, even if a sloop is going up to Albany the last day [of Passover].⁶⁹

In this last postscript Aaron Hart had asked his son to present his compliments to all his "auld achventance," and then recorded most of them by name. This list was really a roster of some of the best mercantile houses in old New York.

The friendship between Eleazar Levy and Aaron Hart, we recall, had been forged on the Canadian frontier over thirty years earlier. Levy, like almost all the Canadians,

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was a loyal subject of Great Britain in the days before the Revolution. In 1766, when Guy Carleton came back to the Province of Quebec as commander in chief, Eleazar Levy headed the list of merchants and citizens who pledged their loyalty to king and parliament and promised universal and immediate obedience to the dictates of the Stamp Act. Yet as Levy signed his name to this "Humble Address" he must have had his misgivings, for, as we have seen, he was then in the throes of a bitter struggle to recover property seized from him by the British armed forces.

But Levy had had his fill of British justice by the time the Revolutionary War broke out and, fleeing from New York to the Continental stronghold of Philadelphia, he threw in his lot with the Whigs. After the peace he returned to New York City and continued to remain in close touch with his lifelong friend across the border in Three Rivers. The affection which the two old men cherished for one another was such that the irascible and aging Levy never hesitated to write frankly and brutally to Hart when the occasion demanded. His *amour propre* was offended because Aaron had seen fit to send his two older sons to New York to strengthen their Jewish loyalties but had not consulted him. True, the Judahs, with whom they had been staying in Canada, were cousins of the Harts, but their Jewishness left much to be desired. But then what could one expect of those Montreal Jews! Having scolded his good friend for not consulting him about putting the boys up with a good Jewish family, he next turned to the subject of Hart's letter to him: the education of young Benjamin Hart for the medical profession.

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There were two ways to secure a medical education, Levy wrote: one was formal and academic training in a Latin school, the other was through apprenticeship. Levy favored the latter method and pointed out that Cousin Bernard Judah was studying with Dr. Bard, no doubt Samuel Bard, who had been chosen by George Washington as his personal physician while in New York in spite of the fact that he had been a Tory. Here is Levy's letter:

New York, June 4th, 1794.

Mr. Aaron Hart,

Dear Sir:

I am favor'd with yours of 29th April regarding your son Benj. If you intend him for a doctor, he should have the Latin language in some degree of perfection. Therefore not a day should be lost to put him to a Latin school and that can be done under your own eye at Montreal or Quebec Seminary, tho' I believe his cousin, Barnard Judah, is to be a doctor without Latin. He is with Doctor Bard where he is fully employ'd in carry'g out medecines, and he has an uncle who, if you will believe what some of his good family say, he was eminent in his proffession in England. Inclosed is one of his advertisem'ts.

All over this continent a practitioner, of what is called a D'r, is included an apothecary, a surgeon, and physician. This can be learn'd in N. York, Philadelphia, etc., and can be learned equally as well in Quebec or Montreal where there are equal as good practitioners as here. You will be at less expence, and he be under the superintendence of his parents and family, and that he stands much in need of.

I neither knew your intention and for what purpose the boys were sent here, but as you say in your last letter, for them to learn to be good *Yehudim* [Jews]. Mr. Uriah Judah's family was not so well suited for that purpose as that was your object. Yourself and family and Moses who placed them there

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know more than I do, tho' I have heard from a person of veracity a true description of the Jews at Montreal.

I wish you would come to N. York this summer as it is said you had some inclination thereto. I will come a considerable part of the way to meet you, and at N. York my house and every think therein will be as your [own]. You need be at no other expence than your pocket money and of y'r journey, nay shall be glad if you will spend the winter with me.

I think you can easily come now as your two sons are grown up and in business, and there is no great business doing in the winter.

It is unnecessary troubling you with any Congregation news or a description of people here, your sons having been so recently here and at Philadelphia.

Wishing happiness to yourself, wife, and family, I am

Truly and sincerely your friend,
Eleazar Levy.⁷⁰

The advantage of the apprenticeship type of training was that young Benjamin could study in Montreal or Quebec where his father could keep an eye on him . . . and the boy sorely needed that care. At least Levy thought so. Apparently the fifteen-year-old Benjamin, like his oldest brother Moses, tended to run wild. In later years Benjamin was a sobersides, a distinguished Canadian citizen, a president of the synagogue, and a dignified magistrate. He never became a doctor, but Aaron nevertheless got a physician in the family when, three years later, his daughter Catherine married Cousin Bernard Judah, the Barnard of Levy's letter.

Levy's bark was far worse than his bite, for, as we have seen in the above letter, he begged his old friend Hart, now seventy, to leave his village and to spend the winter with him in metropolitan New York. The two older Hart boys,

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Moses and Ezekiel, were mature enough to run the business—they were twenty-six and twenty-four respectively—and there were precious few transactions in Three Rivers throughout the winter.

In this last supposition Levy was probably wrong. Aaron Hart was a busier and richer man than even his friend imagined. He had his fingers in a half-dozen different pies. Possibly one of the reasons why Aaron Hart warned Moses about talking too much about his business to the New York "Jues," or even to his family, was that he had no desire to let the world know how well he was doing. Perhaps he was afraid of an "evil eye"; more probably he had found from costly experience that it was not wise to boast of good fortune.

It had been a slow climb for him since he had first arrived with the English troops in 1759 or 1760. It was not until 1761 that he was to open a shop, and he had to wait for three more years before he bought his first piece of property. There had been reverses—he was burnt out in 1762—but in general his wealth had grown slowly but steadily. In this respect his career was not typical of the Canadian Jewish traders and merchants, most of whom had suffered severe reverses from which they, apparently, never recovered.

By 1778 Aaron was able to build his own home and to move out of the dark rooms on the second floor of his shop where he had lived for many years. Throughout his career the store had been the hub of his business life and success. The fur trade had helped; the commission business and shipping had contributed to his wealth; in later years he

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and the boys built and operated a brewery. Without doubt he was Three Rivers' chief banker or moneylender. When his chests were opened by the notaries after his death, they found about £3,700 in cash. He owned several choice pieces of property in Three Rivers, and he had gradually acquired thousands of acres of farm land over a period of four decades. Much of this land must have come to him in payment of goods and old debts secured by promissory notes and mortgages.

There can be little question that Aaron Hart, at the close of the Revolution, was the richest Jew in Canada, and one of the richest men in Three Rivers. But the rumor of fabulous wealth, current after his death in 1800, was an exaggeration. An analysis of the 120-page inventory of his estate shows that he was worth, roughly, \$100,000 when he died.

Certainly Hart and his Jewish friends, whether they made or lost money, did this: as merchants and traders, shippers and enterprisers, they helped to bring settlers and goods and a higher standard of living to a wilderness which was one day to become a great country. They themselves made no such claim. Yet they were pioneers of progress; they were co-builders of a great commonwealth.

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